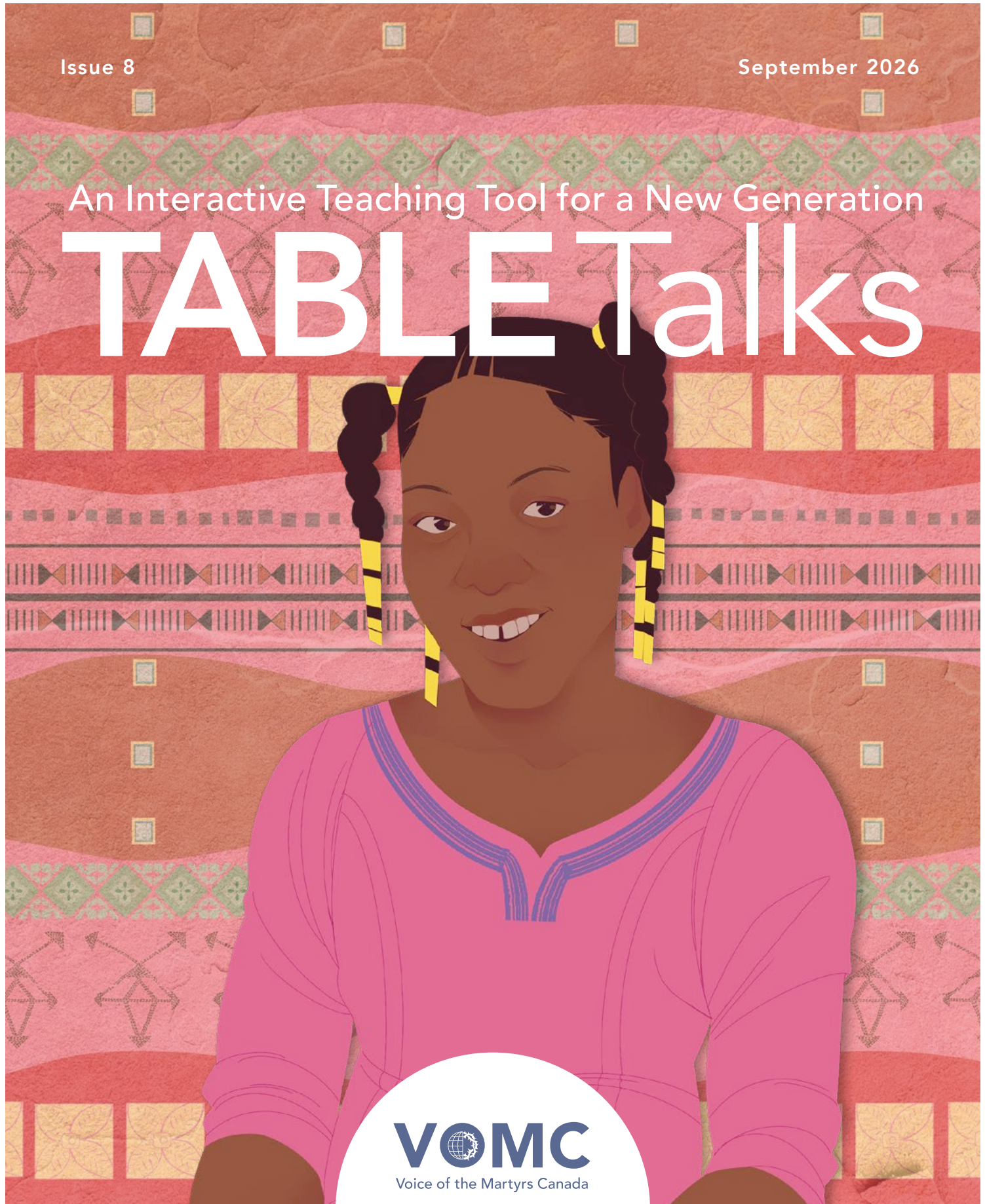


Issue 8

September 2026

An Interactive Teaching Tool for a New Generation

TABLETalks



VOMC
Voice of the Martyrs Canada

ALONG THE WAY • INVESTIGATING THE STORY • GUESS THE PHRASE

Along the Way

**Disclaimer: The following story is a work of fiction inspired by true events. Efe's name has been changed, and some details have been simplified or softened for younger readers.*

My name is Efe and I live in Benin. I grew up in a stilt house overlooking a lake. Our entire community – including the mosques – was built on stilts above the water. I was always careful to keep my balance, especially along the narrow wooden pathways to school. I still remember the panic I felt when I heard the drums of a *Vodún* ceremony in the distance and almost fell in. The drums made me uneasy, even though they were common. I brushed it off, and life continued.

With a big family, I rarely got my father's attention. I learned to stay out of his way and help my mother. I felt small, but I was safe.

When I was a teenager, my father died. My mother remarried and had more children. Deciding I was old enough to fend for myself, she made me leave. I went to live with my aunt

and uncle, spending my days cleaning and running errands. I cried often during that time.

One day, walking to the market platform, I heard joyful singing from a nearby church. I'd never been to church before. Curious, I went inside. The pastor's wife made me feel welcome, and soon after, I gave my life to Jesus. For the first time, I thought life would get better.

Instead, things became much harder. One Sunday, my aunt confronted me: "A seller at the market told me you went to a church."

Hoping she cared, I admitted the truth: "I've given my life to Jesus and have become a Christian."

She beat me and kicked me out. Rejected again, I spent months sleeping on wooden platforms and walkways until a Muslim woman offered me work as a house cleaner. I had a place to stay again, and she even let me go to church.

But as I became more involved in the Christian

community, my employer changed her mind. I had to sneak out to attend, and when she caught me, she punished me harshly, withholding my wages and mocking my faith when I asked for them. "Go ask Jesus for money!" she would shout.

I discovered that following Jesus had a cost. With no other option, I stayed and took sewing classes, hoping to start a business. When I passed my exams, she kicked me out too.

"I've given my life to Jesus and have become a Christian."

Once again, I slept on wooden walkways until the sewing academy allowed me to stay in their workshop. Unknown to me, my pastor's wife told VOM ministry workers about my situation. Through the generosity of other Christians, I received everything I needed to start my business, including a place to live and work.

When things were dark, I wasn't sure the Lord would rescue me. Now I know He was working everything for my good. I pray that Christians won't grow tired of praying for and supporting those who suffer for the Gospel. I praise God for everything He has done for me!

Reading Between the Lines

True or False

Circle T or F.

1. Efe lived in a house on land. T / F
2. A church welcomed Efe. T / F
3. Efe gave up after things got hard. T / F

Nouns and Verbs

Circle the nouns and underline the verbs in each sentence below.

1. Efe walked to school.
2. The drums scared Efe.
3. The employer kicked Efe out.

Past Tense Practice

Fill in the blanks with the correct past tense verbs.

1. Efe _____ (live) by a lake.
2. She _____ (hear) drums.
3. She _____ (learn) how to sew.

Finish the Sentence

Complete the sentences in your own words.

1. Efe felt afraid when _____

2. Efe felt hopeful when _____

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Past Tense Practice

Fill in the blanks with the correct past tense verbs.

1. Efe lived (live) by a lake.
2. She heard (hear) drums.
3. She learned (learn) how to sew.

Finish the Sentence

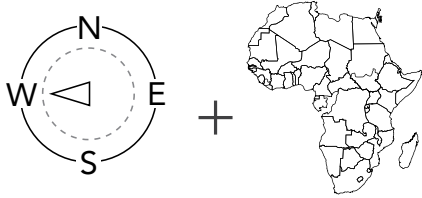
Complete the sentences in your own words.

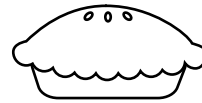
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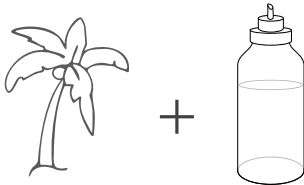
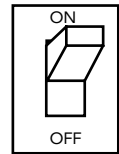
Guess the Phrase

Look at the clues and write the missing words on the blank lines next to them to guess the phrase. Go to www.vomcanada.com/TableTalksBenin26 for the online answer key.

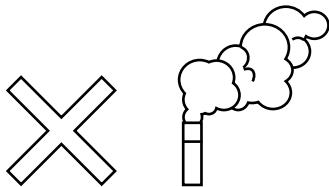
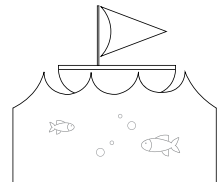
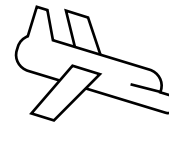


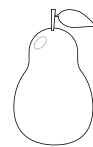


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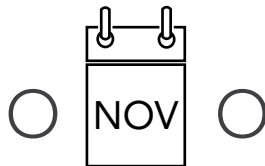


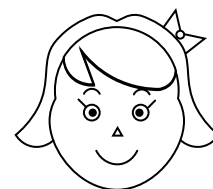
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Guess the Phrase

Answer Sheet

Benin is a country in **West Africa**. It borders Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Togo and Niger.

West Africa

Python

Since the 19th century, **palm oil** has played a vital role in Benin's economy. Plantations were created to meet high Western demand for the oil, especially for use in soap production. These large farms covered approximately 500,000 hectares, and the oil was primarily processed manually by small-scale producers, many of whom were women.

In Benin, snakes are highly revered and even worshipped. They are believed to bring good fortune. The **Temple of Pythons** is a sacred shrine where dozens of pythons live freely on the premises.

Palm Oil

Atlantic Ocean

Benin is situated along the southern coast of the Gulf of Guinea, which is part of the **Atlantic Ocean**.

Benin has one of the lowest **smoking** rates in the world. Only about four percent of people aged 15 and older smoke daily.

No Smoking

Parrots

Parrots (particularly Senegal parrots) hold significant cultural and economic importance in Benin. They are often used for medicinal and spiritual purposes, with feathers and other parts sold in traditional medicine markets.

The capital of Benin is **Porto-Novo**. The name "Porto-Novo" is Portuguese for "new port".

Porto-Novo

Soccer

Football (**soccer**) is the national sport of Benin. As the country's most popular sport, Soccer is deeply embedded in the nation's culture and social life. The Benin national football team is known as *Les Écureuils* ("The Squirrels")

Weigh In

Weighing the facts about Benin

1.

Benin was once a major hub of the Atlantic slave trade. In this system, neighbours often sold neighbours into captivity, creating deep, lasting trauma. The effects of these experiences continue to shape the region today.

2.

The village of Ganvié (home to 25,000 inhabitants) sits on Lake Nokoué in Benin. Often called the “Venice of Africa,” it is a stilt-built community that believes water offers both protection and provision.

3.

Benin is the birthplace of Vodún (pronounced “voh-doon”), the country’s national religion. This belief system, which teaches that people can communicate with spirits and ancestors, shapes daily life through rituals, music and dance. Haitian Vodoun originates from this tradition, while the term “voodoo” is a common but inaccurate English rendering.

4.

Benin has a very young population, with over 65 percent under 25, yet long-term illnesses still cause about 39 percent of deaths, often linked to lifestyle and limited healthcare access.



Corresponding Question Points:

1. Benin’s history is preserved through stories, proverbs and even silence marked by lingering shame. Why is slavery publicly memorialized, yet often taught with great caution or reluctance?
2. Research the Fon and Tofinu tribes and consider how Benin’s history of the slave trade influenced the founding of Ganvié. How was this community shaped by the belief that living on water offered protection from capture? What does Ganvié reveal about the power of belief in determining where – and how – people live?
3. Because Vodún is a deeply communal faith, rituals such as sacrifices, festivals and funerals require full community participation. Christians who refuse to participate are often viewed as disrespectful or as betraying their ancestry. What social and economic pressures might Christians face in this context?
4. Health is often influenced not only by biology, but also by everyday choices shaped by culture, environment and social expectations. If God’s boundaries are intended to lead to life and vitality, why does choosing to follow them often result in ridicule or social backlash?

One Way

Religious Comparison: Compare & Contrast What the Bible Says

Vodún: Humans are Spirit

The core belief of *Vodún* is that **everything is Spirit**. Humans are understood as spiritual beings that inhabit the visible world, while the unseen realm is dominated by various spirits, including those of the deceased.

The purpose of *Vodún* is to restore and maintain balance, health, protection and favour in human life by serving God and the spirits. This is expressed through prayer and specific ritual practices.

Vodún Worship

These acts of *Vodún* worship are understood in transactional terms. The relationship operates much like an exchange. Protection from illness, danger or misfortune is sought, and rituals and prayers are offered in return.

This dynamic can be compared to a scale used in ancient trade: what is desired is placed on one side, and what is offered in exchange is placed on the other. The goal is balance.

It is believed that these forms of worship, the “currency” of the transaction, will *buy* well-being and protection in daily life.

Sources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Whydah
<https://www.laurewanders.com/ganvie-lake-village-benin/>
<https://historyrise.com/the-impact-of-vodun-voodoo-religion-on-benins-cultural-history/>
<https://worldfactbook.co/edition.php?year=2021&country=benin>

Christianity: Humans are Matter Given Life by God's Breath

“Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

~ Genesis 2:7 NIVUK

This verse is foundational for a Biblical understanding of what it means to be human. From this portion of Scripture, we see that **humans are formed from physical matter** (dust) and then given life by God's breath. The account in Genesis reveals that our physical bodies are not accidental. It was God's intention that we are called to live faithfully in and through our bodies.

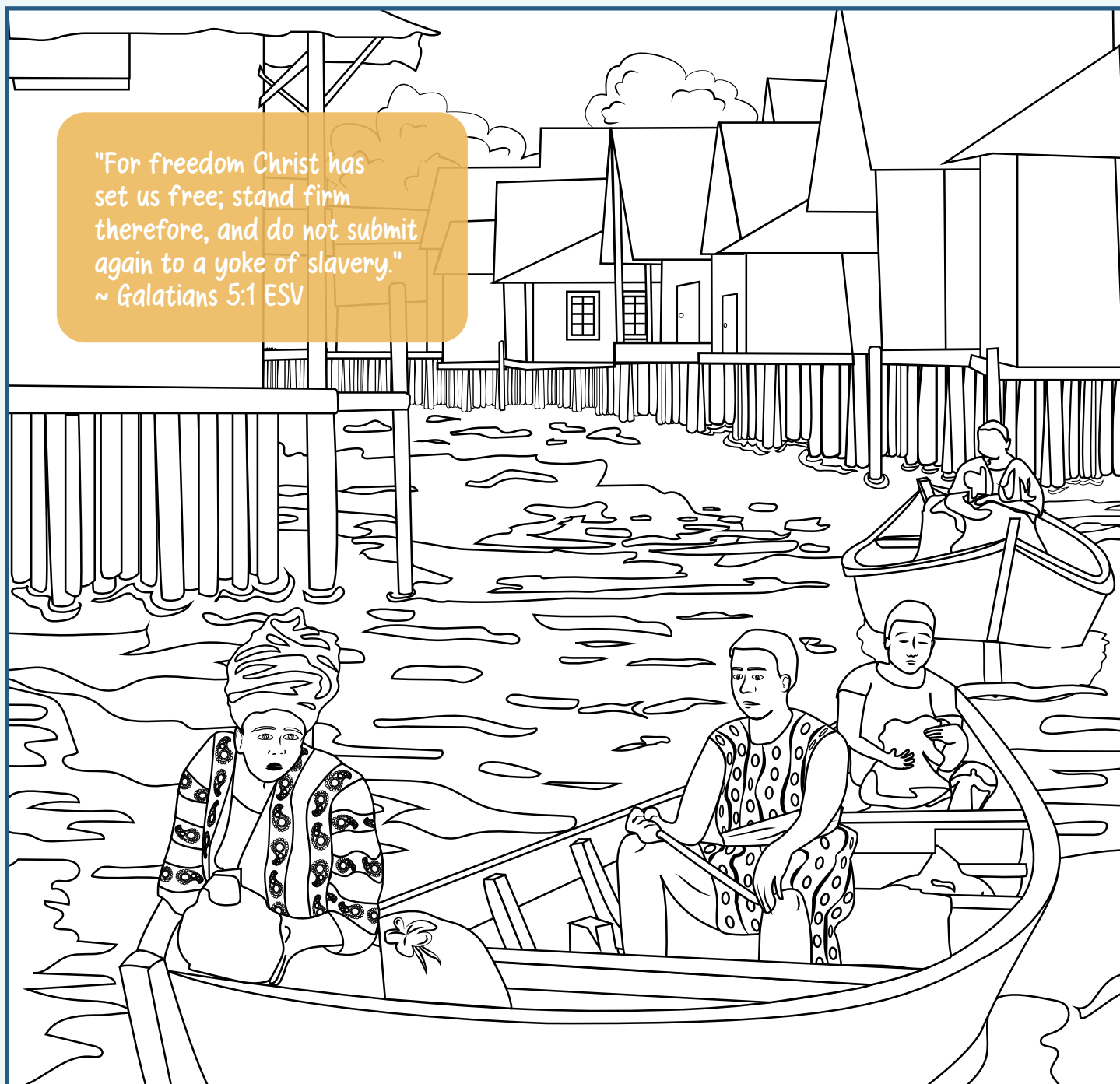
Throughout Scripture, we read that God's image is displayed and reproduced by living, embodied human beings, not ghostly spirits. Physicality is part of what God calls “very good” (Genesis 1:31). God's ultimate plan of salvation is to restore health, protection and favour to humankind, which includes redeemed bodies: “[Christ] will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body...” (Philippians 3:21 ESV).

Christian Worship

The primary aim of Christian worship is to glorify God and respond to His grace. While Christians *do* pray for protection and provision, these requests flow from a deeper purpose: loving, obeying and trusting God. Well-being is part of God's plan to rescue and restore people; it is not something we earn by making transactional deals.

Colouring Connection!

"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."
~ Galatians 5:1 ESV



DIY Photo Coasters

What You'll Need

- Small foam paint brushes
- Ceramic tiles (inexpensively found at a local building supply)
- Mod Podge
- 4 × 4 Coaster print outs
- Waterproof acrylic sealer spray (Note: if you are using different brands of products, the results may vary.)
- White acrylic craft paint
- Felt, fleece or cork scraps for backing, plus hot glue to attach the backing



Instructions

1. Paint the rough, unfinished sides of the coasters. Once the tile has dried, grab your photos.
2. Trim each photo into a square shape to fit your tile.
3. Apply Mod Podge to backside of trimmed photo. Then place photo on tile and press down. Allow to dry completely.
4. Once dry, apply a layer of Mod Podge to the top of the photo. Use even left-to-right strokes. (As always with Mod Podge, lines will show.)
5. Allow to dry completely. Repeat with two more layers of Mod Podge (allowing each layer to dry completely before applying the next).
6. Apply acrylic sealer spray to front side of coaster. Apply one to three layers of spray, allowing it to dry. This step, depending on your choice of product, creates a smooth surface finish.
7. Cut felt of your choice and glue to the back of the coaster. This step is important to prevent wooded or glass surfaces from being scratched by the tile.

Find the latest coaster design below!



