

LOVE PERIOD.

WITH REV. DR.
JACQUI LEWIS

Living A Spiritually Awakened Life with
Otis Moss III

Jacqui Lewis: Hey everyone. I'm Jacqui Lewis and I am the host of Love Period. A podcast produced by the Center for Action and Contemplation. This is our fourth season, and in this one we're thinking about how to reframe and reclaim Christian as a religion of love, as a religion of Rabbi Jesus. What about if we took it back to Jesus and took it back to love? What if we take it back to scripture that elucidates this beautiful movement of love and justice? Join us this season for beautiful conversations with folks across the spectrum to talk about what's love got to do with scripture and what's scripture got to do with love. My guest today is the Reverend Doctor Otis Moss III. He's the senior pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, and the author of a new book, *Dancing in the Darkness: Spiritual Lessons for Thriving in Turbulent Times*. Welcome, Otis. How you doing?

Otis Moss III: I'm doing well. It's great to talk with you. I can't complain. Doing the best I can with what I have.

Jacqui Lewis: One of us has a son that graduated from Morehouse.

Otis Moss III: Yes, indeed.

Jacqui Lewis: It's not me. Let's just talk for a minute about a father's love seeing his boy grow into a man who becomes his colleague in alumni world.

Otis Moss III: It was one of the most extraordinary experiences. For those who are listening who may not be familiar, my son graduated from Morehouse College. I'm a graduate of Morehouse College, and my father is a graduate of Morehouse College. And so it's three generations graduating from Morehouse. Morehouse is the only all male African American institution in the country. Maybe the world. I'm not quite sure if the world. I don't know if there's anything in the Caribbean or in Africa that is an all male space of learning for higher education. But it was an absolutely sublime experience to witness the graduation of my son. And for those who are not familiar with HBCUs and especially Morehouse, there are all of these rites of passage rituals we have. And especially Morehouse is big on the rituals. Spelman is big, but Morehouse takes it to a completely different level. So let me paint the picture so that people can get a sense of why this was so impactful beyond the fact of, oh, your son graduated.

When every student arrives on Morehouse's campus, along with their parents, they take you into the chapel and they have this ritual where the faculty and the staff and the dean of the chapel, they're on the dais, and they ask all of the young men to stand and they begin to speak to them to say that you are about to take these steps into adulthood. And there are expectations of you. Not of your parents, but of you. That we're going to be expecting things from you. Not from your mom, not from your dad. We're going to be expecting things from you. And they do this piece where they have all the parents stand, and we have to then talk to our son and say, we release you at this point. That you are stepping into adulthood.

And so we're talking to them and then they in turn talk to us. Mom, Dad, I am ready. I am ready to step into this new space. I'm ready to soar. It's just beautiful. It's just really beautiful. But then they do this thing when they come to school where they march all of the students out and alumni line up on the left and the right side, and you have all of these different chants that are going on about Morehouse as the young men are holding each other's

shoulders, and they march out into the street and line up. And then the dean says, “I present to you the class of 2023 that will make change in this world.” It’s powerful. But I have a little video of my father as he’s standing lined up with the alumni and you can see he just starts crying.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh wow.

Otis Moss III: It’s powerful. I was just imagining that he’s thinking about the moment when he was at Morehouse and all of that. So that’s when you get to the school. And then when the preparation for graduation ... It’s several days of different activities and celebration before you get to the graduation. It’s all these rites of passage programs. And the one that kicks it off is the passing of the light. The motto of Morehouse is *et facta est lux*. Let there be light in Latin. And so my father, because he’s an elder alum, he’s a trustee emeritus, he’s on the dais with all these other alumni that are elders, but not all of them have grandsons who are about to graduate. So he gives the charge of the passing of the light. And every Morehouse graduate has an actual candle, and all of the alumni are to light the students’ candles that were passing the light. And so my father and myself got a chance to light Elijah’s candle, and it was beautiful. Then we come to the graduation. And before we even get to the graduation, they decided that they were going to record Elijah throughout that weekend because it was three generations graduating so they wanted to make sure they recorded him on video. And they had an opportunity to record all three of us together.

And when I say Jacque, I’ve heard a variety of things my father has shared and stories and whatnot. He shared something that literally just broke us all up. So they ask each of us ... It’s myself, it’s Elijah, it’s my father. We’re just sitting next to each other. They have a camera, and they ask us all the same question. What did Morehouse do for you? If you had not gone to Morehouse, what would your life be like? It was something along those lines. So Elijah answers and I answer. Then my father answers. And my father has this wonderful, slow, deep, resonant voice. And he quietly thinks and then quietly, he says, “In 1952 I arrived on Morehouse’s campus and Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays said to me, “Welcome Mr. Moss.” He paused. He said, “Many of you may not think that that was important, but all my life I had been called everything but Mr.”

Jacqui Lewis: Oh my God.

Otis Moss III: “Now I was being called Mr. Moss by Dr. Benjamin Elijah Mays. It changed my life.” We were done.

Jacqui Lewis: I guess so. I’m done. Oh, man.

Otis Moss III: The radicality of being called Mr from a person who grew up as a rural sharecropper, and he lands on the campus of Morehouse College. So now we get to the graduation. And the graduation is set up at Morehouse where you first have a processional of African drummers for the students to even arrive to their seats. And the torch is carried. They bring a torch. And the torch this year was carried by Olympic champion Edwin Moses who’s a graduate of Morehouse College. And he was celebrating his ... What is it? I think it’s his 40th or something, reunion or something of that nature. 50th. I’m not sure what it was, but he lights the torch, places and on the dais and then of course they get to the point where they

bring the students to receive their degrees. They call my son's name. We hear it and of course I'm shouting. I got a great picture I'm going to send to you. I have on Instagram ... I have it caption this because it's Elijah. He's just joyous. And you can see me in the background just hollering,

Jacqui Lewis: I saw you. I saw you.

Otis Moss III: When he goes up the steps, the first person to greet him was his grandfather. And one of the photographers captured the experience of grandfather and grandson. And you can see the just depth of emotion in my father's eyes. I told the photographer, I said, "If you didn't get any other picture, you got the essence of what the experience of Morehouse College is and for our family in that one embrace in that picture." And what was so powerful, you heard everyone on the dais ... Because they all know my father. They knew that his grandson was graduating. You heard this collective ... When they hug. It was really powerful.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh man.

Otis Moss III: And there's nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing that compares. I get it now. When you see your child do well, it is extraordinary. I came to Morehouse. I was an athlete and all that kind of stuff. But I went to Morehouse on probation and I was able to graduate with honors. I did very well at Morehouse. It changed my life and all of that. My son graduates Phi Beta Kappa.

Jacqui Lewis: Come on through. Come through Eli.

Otis Moss III: Did the doggone thing. He just really did and it was just amazing that here his father and his grandfather, we got into the school on a wing and a prayer, and here he comes just elevating everything. And it's just ... I don't know. It's sublime. It is a sacred sublime experience to witness that.

Jacqui Lewis: I am grateful that on this day I get to hear my friend talk about his baby boy this way. It's amazing. I saw the picture of you in ecstasy and shouting. I said, what is he saying? I will send a caption now. Otis, I got to see you and your dad two months ago at our Freedom Rising Conference in a Zoom together. And I haven't had a chance to process that with you watching you watch your dad. So I'm going to ask you now. You got to watch your dad on the dais this last week or so, you got to watch your dad in that Zoom. You watched your dad a lot in your life. What's it like watching your dad?

Otis Moss III: It is really a joy. I've been given a gift and my father is a father figure to many. And we've always been incredibly close. I have watched him since I was a child and been enamored by his quiet kindness, his gentleness, his strength, and his ability to communicate love. That's his thing. He believes that a man's responsibility is loving. That's the way he communicates to his children. That's the way he communicates to my mother. He exudes the idea that the essence of manhood is tapping into this idea of loving and lovingness. And to witness him in so many different iterations is always a wonder.

And then the other piece is that he taps into some things that we have either forgotten or we have closed the door to and that is this element of mysticism, of encounter with the spirit. He believes in the movement and the power of God. A God who cannot be contained. A God loose in the world. A God that manifests God's self in a multiplicity of ways and is demonstrated through the life of Jesus Christ. It can be witnessed in history. It can be seen in moments that we think is just suffering. But we can find glimpses of light, holes in the darkness that the light shines through. He believes that. He functions that. And he never ceases to amaze me. He'll be 89 this year, and we recently recorded him for a short film, just getting his stories. Hearing him talk about the movement and experiences in the South. What it was like to work with Dr. King and Fred Shuttlesworth and Fannie Lou Hamer.

What it was like to be an organizer and serve with Martin Luther King, senior at Ebenezer. We've been collecting those stories so that another generation can hear that. But it really is. He's my hero. He is my model in reference to ministry and in manhood. And he's always been ... Years ago when he retired from his church, I had to give remarks and I said, "My father demonstrates what it means to be a gentleman." A gentle man. What that means. The gentle and man together operates and the way he communicates in every aspect of his being.

Jacqui Lewis: I love teasing your father about, I'm going to help him write that book. I don't know that I'm teasing.

Otis Moss III: We've been trying to get him to write the book forever.

Jacqui Lewis: Write that book.

Otis Moss III: We just got to record them so-

Jacqui Lewis: Record him. Yeah. Otis. I hope it doesn't embarrass you when I say I think of you as that way too.

Otis Moss III: Oh, I appreciate that. Thank you. Thank you, Jacque.

Jacqui Lewis: A gentle man. Strong, powerful, brilliant, well-versed in many disciplines, rigorous, but also gentle. Where does that come from? Is that your dad in you? Is it something you've also curated?

Otis Moss III: I had good models. My father was one model. Another person was Hoover Thomas, who was the person who ran the junior deacon program at our church and a former police officer. But he was that working class brother who believed in deep commitment. He didn't lead through yelling and being gruff even though he was a big man. But he led through relationship. Being in relationship with people. And he loved to teach and he loved mentoring young men. He didn't have children, he didn't have any sons. And we became his sons. We called him Uncle Hoover. He was a deacon but everybody called him Uncle Hoover. He was the man. He would show up to your track meets your basketball games and if anyone got into trouble seriously with the police, you called Uncle Hoover. Uncle Hoover intervened for you.

His wife, we called Aunt Clarice. She's now 93, 94, who is from, I think, Clarksdale, Mississippi. She cooked for 30 people every Sunday. You went to her house. Now, she rarely ever ate, but she cooked for everybody else. Was one of the most amazing cooks. Everything from scratch. So she did these rolls from scratch and her stuffing was from scratch. And she enjoyed having people in her home so that she could also get you straight. But also telling stories. And so this couple ... This was this wonderful loving couple that was a part of our church. And they believed in mentoring young people. That was their calling because they came from a community in the south. They wanted to recreate that kind of village community in Cleveland, Ohio. And they believed in that. And so many of us, we are products, graduates of the Hoover and Clarice Thomas school of life.

Jacqui Lewis: I love that. Love that.

Otis Moss III: Yeah. There was Deacon Finley that I remember growing up. I think Deacon Finley was from Alabama. Deacon Finley used to walk six miles every day. That's how he'd work out. That was his thing. And I remember him in his 80s and here he was, again, a union person in his very quiet organizing way, but he believed in the dignity of labor and he would share the stories with people. This very dignified, smooth brother. Just dressed to the nines, had his hair cut all the time, and just always looked so good in every aspect of how he did. Sam Tidmore, former football player for the Browns. Played with Jim Brown. Sam had all daughters so Sam loved ... He loved us. He loved the guys because he had all girls. And so he always wanted a son to play football.

Jacqui Lewis: I need some man energy. That's funny.

Otis Moss III: But Sam Tidmore, again, he goes to Ohio State plays for Cleveland Browns. He was a linebacker. He was a deacon in our church, but he was also a part of the entrepreneurial class. He owned Burger Kings. Several Burger Kings. And then one time he was able to get a distributorship with I think Coca-Cola or something of that nature. But he was committed, deeply committed to raising money in reference to social justice work. So the anti-apartheid movement, Sam Tidmore was raising money. When Jesse Jackson first ran for president in '84, Sam Tidmore, along with Arnold Pinkney, who was Jesse Jackson's campaign manager, who's a part of our church in Cleveland ... And they're going across the country telling these bougie black folk who thought they made it, they said, "This is your responsibility to be a part of this movement. You can't just make it up the corporate ladder by yourself."

And so those are the men I was around. Nobody's ever asked me that. All of them were married and deeply committed to the relationship that they were in. They were committed to the church they were part of. They were migrants from the south who had this village mentality. And they just really believed that the responsibility of a man was to not in the traditional way, I'm to protect this, that. It was like, all I'm supposed to do is love and make the world better for younger people. That's what they truly believed. Thank you for asking that because I've never really thought about all of these elders who were around me. They were older than my parents, who had a huge impact on me.

Jacqui Lewis: There's so much, Otis, going on in the world that feels like darkness. And I'm an empath. I think you are too. My antenna do not ... I can't function sometimes when there's too many stories. One more shooting, one more stabbing. One more child on the porch shot in the

head. One more body laid in the ground. One more BS bad stuff said in the media. I just wanted to crawl away I was so tired. So your book is a call to learn how to dance in these turbulent times. Can you and I talk a bit about how you make meaning of these turbulent times. In other words, what in the hell is going on?

Otis Moss III: I said the other day in conversation at the MLK library in DC, white supremacy is a virus that continues to mutate. The original sin of our country. And what we're witnessing today is a mutation of the antebellum confederate variety in a 21st century shape.

Jacqui Lewis: Say that one more time. That's so beautiful. Say it one more time.

Otis Moss III: What we're witnessing today is a 21st century variety of the antebellum and confederate shape of the virus mutated for the 21st century. The language has changed a little bit, but the intent is the same. And in order to deal with a virus, you've got to be inoculated. You have to have a vaccine. And what's interesting is black people have always been bringing the vaccine to America. Every fundamental movement that we have been participating in has always been expanded by the vision that comes through black spirituality. Whether you're talking about abolition or you're talking about the labor movement, the anti-lynching movement, the freedom movement, it blesses everybody. It doesn't bless one person. When black people speak of freedom, the inoculation is not localized. It's expanded throughout the democratic project. And when you hear black lives matter, you're hearing someone raising the question about inoculation from the virus. And the work continues. We're not going to, in this moment, get rid of it, but we can inoculate ourselves from many of the symptoms.

Jacqui Lewis: I like that metaphor. I think of racism, white supremacy as a virus as well. So I want to talk about ... Let's say, how do we develop more antibodies?

Otis Moss III: The way in which the natural world functions that in order to develop the antibodies, you still have to be exposed to the virus. So here's the interesting thing. Florida wants to remove our exposure by keeping us from reading the the necessary work that can develop the vaccine.

Jacqui Lewis: That's right. That's right. That works, right? Yeah.

Otis Moss III: So if you can't read Toni Morrison, you can't read Maya Angelou, you can't read Zora Neale Hurston ... I can't read anything about Rosa Parks. You are removing the natural way in which the body politic can inoculate itself from this virus that keeps mutating.

Jacqui Lewis: And it isn't. I don't know what metaphors they're working with, but it is by design to extract, remove, buffer, make a prophylactic around little white children so that they do not know. They don't have the capacity for empathy. They do not know. They don't develop the natural antibodies to racial hatred because-

Otis Moss III: I'm glad you said that because I think that just as a virus functions that can destroy portions of the immune system or portions of the body, white supremacy is attempting to destroy portions of us spiritually so that we are unable to fight against this and we think it's normative.

Jacqui Lewis: That's right. Weakening the immune system as opposed to strengthening it. In our little

multi-ethnic multicultural church at middle, I feel like I'm dangerously close to people like, "Is she going to talk about that one more time? Is she going to talk about white supremacy one more time?" Robert Carter is the psychologist that I studied that does racial identity development. He says there are a lot of differences that divide us, but race is a different difference. It's everything. We're talking about ethnicity really, not race, but America thinks it's race. But it's everything, right? It's healthcare, it's housing. I'm going to misquote this number, but there's a doctor I follow named Uché Blackstock. She reported a study that was done that talks about how many more black deaths we've had in the last 20 years. And it's something like six million more deaths than would've been predicted. More deaths than normal. More deaths than normative.

So your dad was talking about fasting and praying the last time we were all together. Talk about getting us back to mysticism. What are we going to do, Otis? What does Jesus, Yeshua, Ben Joseph, what do our texts tell us? What are we going to do to dance through these turbulent times to learn how to move in these turbulent times? And to go back to our metaphor, to inoculate ourselves, to grow some antibodies against all the violence and anger. What are you thinking about that?

Otis Moss III: I think that scripture gives us a lot of help in reference to that. Second Chronicles breaks it down. If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves. Humble, pray, seek my face. I love the verb. You got to turn. Turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin. And the final portion, I will heal. I will heal the land.

So the action, I think for faithful people, this idea of humbling ourselves. And we are in a moment of everybody feels as if not only they're the expert and they know everything and they can broadcast themselves but the lack of humility and civility in society is a cacophony of sounds or in the words of one writer, signifying nothing. And so I think that that is one of the things that this idea of humility and prayer ... And prayer, not as simple requests but prayer as listening and also communicating, which in our modern materialist society, we don't believe. We want trinkets, genies and little rabbit's foots for our God.

Jacqui Lewis: Oh my goodness. That's true.

Otis Moss III: We just want God to just give me the pin number so I can get hooked up.

Jacqui Lewis: Talisman. Let me just rub you. See what you got.

Otis Moss III: That's it. That's how we want. We don't want the work. Spirituality demands work. It's heavy lifting and deep commitment. It's a way in which we have to live. And I think that those people of faith and deep commitment are required to that and then required to be disturbed by the scripture that we lift up and read. So in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God. I wonder if some evangelicals have ever read that. Certain ones, I should say. And looking at the idea of Jesus spending a ... This Palestinian Jew. We had a group of young people who came and they sang at our church singing this song called God of Color. And they were talking about the de-colorization of Jesus in the song. And talking about the fact that recommitting and connecting to this Jewish rabbi operating in Palestine, how that changes everything. Instead of viewing Jesus as if he was a Christian.

Jacqui Lewis: Which is just so what he's not.

Otis Moss III: Yeah. Which freaks out some certain people. We know he wasn't. He was Jewish.

Jacqui Lewis: He was Jewish.

Otis Moss III: Let's roll with this. He was Jewish.

Jacqui Lewis: I love the Second Chronicles text. I love the clear map if you then. Which I also find to be very powerful in Isaiah 58. That fast that God desires. Our brother barber repairs the breach things. Sort of like if you share your food with the hungry, if you provide the poor with shelter, when you see the naked, if you clothe them, if you don't turn away from your own kin, which by the way is all of us, then your light will shine forth like the dawn and your healing will quickly appear. I'm fascinated that those texts both have a sense of contracting that ends in healing, that ends in reparations. Which I'll tell you about that some more another time. This amazing reparations conference I was just at.

But spirituality's a heavy lift. Our light shines in the darkness. Our night becomes like the noon day because we stop oppressing each other. Because we stop being malicious toward each other. But because we decide that God loves all the bodies and we treat people like they're children of God. Otis, I wish I understood this. I don't. I'm just going to say it out loud because maybe you can help me. I do not understand the obsession some Christians have about other people's children trying to be who they're trying to be. Shut up. I don't understand.

Otis Moss III: It is similar to what we have witnessed all through history when there is a shift for people or what they consider to be a cultural norm for people. And libertarians stop being libertarians at that moment. Small government republicans stop being small government at that moment because it rocks and disturbs what has been normative. But it's really the fact that ... I would put it this way. That it's a language issue. And the reason I say it's a language issue is because if you've been speaking something for so long and then someone comes along with new language, it's completely disorienting for you.

And that happened to so many people throughout the years in terms of the way in which they communicated about women, the way that they would communicate about black people, the way that they communicate with people who were same gender loving. The communication changed and then all of a sudden you have two things you can do. You can be ignorant and arrogant and just say, I'm going to do what I'm going to do or you can raise questions about, okay, why did I use the language that I used? Why do I say ... Why do I believe what I believe? And you can do some reassessment. And I think that that's what we're in. And we're in a space where you have people who are giving other people permission not to have self-reflection. And that's a problem.

Jacqui Lewis: That's a problem.

Otis Moss III: That's a real problem.

Jacqui Lewis: That's word. And when I put my psych hat on, I say turbulent times want us to find a thing to cling to. A boundary, a border. We become more tribal. We want to connect with our own kind. We're looking for anchors. We need something not to feel transient or iffy. And so the fundamentalist response to today is these are our core stories and these are our core values and these are the family values and this is the ... So I understand, but it's dangerous when it's happening without critical self-reflection. And woe to the clergy, whoever y'all are, whoever hear this, who don't want to raise a theological curiosity in your people. So they feel like they're theologians and residents in their own lives too. What does this mean for me? What does this mean for the world? What's God got to do with this? What's love got to do with this? It's chaotic right now. And you talk about consecrating chaos. Want to say something about that?

Otis Moss III: Chaos is a part of living. It's a part of life. You can't get away from it. The power of consecrating is knowing that there are certain principles in the midst of chaos that you can harness. Every sailor understands I don't control the water and I don't control the wind, but I can build a ship that can catch the wind and be balanced on the water because I understand the basic physics of how

it functions. And what sailors understand ... And I'm always just fascinated. There's a spirituality I believe in sailing. I don't sail. But just talking to people who sail. In the fact that they say, I can never sail in a straight line because I've got to catch the wind and sometimes I have to tack left and tack right. It's not just going directly where you want to go, it's knowing where you want to end up but you've got to know how to move your sail appropriately to catch the wind during your journey.

So the sailors tell you the journey is just as important as your destination. Having your balance. And here's the other thing that I found out about sailing. I did a sermon some years ago on it because I'm just fascinated by boats and whatnot. The number one reason that boats wreck early on ... These major large boats they used to build in 1500, 1600s and 1700s or whatnot. Major reason that they would wreck had nothing to do with the weather. Had everything to do with the crew. They said, if you've got an inexperienced crew rolling with you, the likelihood that you going to wreck is very high. And so in the midst of chaos to consecrate it's also very important, who's your crew to get you through your chaos? You can't roll with everybody on your ship. When the storm hits you've got to have the right people rolling with you who can say, "Baby, I've been through this before. You're going to be all right. And even if the ship does go down, there's a life preserver over there. Put it on."

Jacqui Lewis: Very good. That's right. That's good. And it makes me think ... Just to get back to the power stories, Otis, you're a consummate storyteller, but our storied book, the scripture, has maps for us because it has testimony, because it has story. We've been here, we've done that, we wrestled this way. This is what we've learned in relationship to the holy that we've passed down to you. Your sermons, your book midrash I'd say on these texts. So what's something that you tack to in scripture that keeps you moving toward ... I don't know. The promised land?

Otis Moss III: In John, the statement is my command is this love each other as I have loved you. And I love when Jesus quotes Old Testament stuff. For example, love the Lord your God with all your heart, your mind, your spirit. Love your neighbor as yourself. And all of scripture is going to hang on this. I'm not going to introduce anything new to you. I'm just going to keep giving you the ancient stuff. You can get that thing right.

Jacqui Lewis: Get it together.

Otis Moss III: So the way in which you build out your theology, don't start with Paul. Start right here and then you'll understand Paul better. You'll be able to understand the Old Testament, the Torah better. Begin right here. Can you love God? And with all your heart, with every emotion that you have. With your mind. That means with an intellect, an intellectual commitment and love. With your spirit. That means your entire being. With your body, which means that your body in itself is a prayer in terms of how you use it.

And then love your neighbor. It's a prerequisite to this. Love your neighbor. Before you can live a neighbor as yourself. So if you're devoid of self-love, if you can't stand yourself, if you hate who you are, then you are incapable of loving your neighbor. And maybe that's the most insidious thing about white supremacy because it tries to say that we have high regard for ourself and in reality we really don't love ourselves enough to be able to love our neighbor.

Jacqui Lewis: Did you read my book? That's exactly right. That's exactly right.

Otis Moss III: That's fierce love right there.

Jacqui Lewis: That's fierce love right there. No, it's true. I mean, I think at the bottom of all this hatred and violence is just holes in the souls of the people who create the world this way. It's not a world created for love and flourishing. It's created out of scarcity and out of want and neediness, quite honestly. I love that though. Those are my favorites. That's why we like each other. Love God with everything. Love neighbor as yourself. Love period.

Otis Moss III: It's pretty basic. You just build out from there. It is. The most difficult thing that humanity will ever engage is the idea of love. There are more books, there are more poems, there are more songs that are written about. Love is the number one thing that is written about in human history because we have yet to fully grasp it. It's a difficult task. It's a very difficult task. The kind of love that we're speaking of in this level. It's just hard. It's just hard.

Jacqui Lewis: It is difficult to love each other and to love ourselves in the container that is an unloving container. But that is our work y'all in our community. Our sons and our daughters, our fathers and our grandfathers, our village of deacons who teach us how to be a man. All of that, to teach us how to love ourselves so we can love the God who's inside us as well. I could talk you for six more hours, but probably I shouldn't.

Otis Moss III: It's always a joy to talk with you storm.

Jacqui Lewis: It's always a joy. Oh, my storm is up here watching us.

Otis Moss III: Oh, you got your picture? Okay, good.

Jacqui Lewis: Do you still have yours?

Otis Moss III: Yeah. I have it in my office at church.

Jacqui Lewis: At your office at church. Y'all, Otis is my bishop and I am his storm. And that belongs to the ex verse. So look us up. Can you give us a blessing as we leave?

Otis Moss III: Certainly. Certainly it would be my joy. May the peace of God rest upon you and may no destructive forces enter into your domicile. May a hedge of protection be placed around your home. And may in the peripheral vision of your spirit, may you witness the holy mischief of our God. And may you hear the laughter of children and hear it as a message and a song coming from the sacred. And may you feel the hugs of elders and experience them as an encounter with an angel. And may you see the hard work simply as a challenge for this moment to build a better space for the next generation. May you learn to love, may you learn to laugh, and may you hold wonder in your heart. We give thanks and give praise unto God on this day at this time. And may we open our hearts up to the message and to the mischief acts that come from holding the prophets and the savior known as Jesus deep in our heart. And we offer this at this moment with a simple word of amen.

Jacqui Lewis: Amen.

Otis Moss III: Amen.

Jacqui Lewis: I love my conversations with Otis. They are always rich and deep like we're sitting on a porch rocking and drinking lemonade. And especially when we talk about his father and his son. I hear a legacy of deep spirituality grounded in scripture, grounded in light. I'm reminded that we are light in the darkness and that our love, our love of ourselves, our love of our God, and our love for one another actually will sustain us with light in these turbulent times.