

Late last month, it was revealed that the engineer who developed Google's self-driving car has set up a religious organization to "develop and promote the realization of a Godhead based on artificial intelligence and through understanding and worship of the Godhead contribute to the betterment of society." For those of us not deeply immersed in developing artificial intelligence (AI), the idea might at first seem laughable; for those closely associated with that development, and who foresee a time when computers will be smarter than all of humankind, the idea isn't that farfetched.

The news gives us an opportunity to consider what attributes make a deity, whether real or created, worthy of our worship. So that will be the topic of this installment of *The Wired Word*.

If you'd prefer a different topic, look at our second lesson, which examines the ongoing crisis in Puerto Rico following the devastation caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. We explore how the interruption of communication exacerbates suffering and hinders recovery, both in natural disasters and in the realm of spiritual life.

The Editorial Team of *The Wired Word*



Would You Worship an AI God? *The Wired Word* for the Week of October 8, 2017

In the News

Anthony Levandowski, the engineer who developed Google's self-driving car, has established a nonprofit religious organization called Way of the Future, complete with an AI (artificial intelligence) god, and has filed as such in California. The filing was discovered last month by *Wired*.

AI means constructing devices that can perform tasks that appear to require something similar to human reasoning. In essence, it describes a computer program that can receive environmental inputs and take actions toward a specified goal, where the actions (and at times the goal) are not explicitly pre-programmed.

While it's not clear what form this "deity" takes -- robot, software, bot, database or something loose in cyberspace -- Levandowski says the purpose of Way of the Future is to "develop and promote the realization of a Godhead based on artificial intelligence, and through understanding and worship of the Godhead contribute to the betterment of society."

Martin Luther wrote, "A 'god' is the term for that to which we are to look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart." Given the human propensity to look for something outside of oneself to be a source of good, be it family or government or friends or something else, it is not at all strange that some people might look to a very high performance computer and its peripherals as their god. Yet, it is also unclear what worshipping such an entity would entail.

In part, Levandowski's new "religion" seems based on the idea of "the singularity," a concept embraced by many cyber-tech companies. Although there are several competing descriptions of the singularity and how it will come into effect, a common characteristic is that computers will become much more intelligent than humans. An article in *VentureBeat* predicts the singularity will happen within the next 25 years, and that within the next 50-100 years, AI might know more than the entire population of earth combined. That article labels the singularity as a "quasi-spiritual idea."

VentureBeat consulted Vince Lynch, who started a company called [IV.AI](#) that builds custom AI for the enterprise. Lynch argues that there are some similarities between how organized religion and AI actually work. He points out that the Bible contains recurring themes, imagery and metaphors.

"Teaching humans about religious education is similar to the way we teach knowledge to machines: repetition of many examples that are versions of a concept you want the machine to learn," Lynch says. "The concept of teaching a machine to learn ... and then teaching it to teach ... (or write AI) isn't so different from the concept of a [person] achieving enlightenment after many lessons learned with varying levels of success and failure."

Lynch said that if you type in multiple verses from the Bible, you can have the AI write a new verse that seems eerily similar -- although we suspect few biblically literate Christians will find his examples all that convincing. An AI that is all powerful in the next 25-50 years could decide to write a similar AI bible for humans to follow, one that matches its own collective intelligence. It might tell you how to live your life.

Some argue that an all-knowing AI that understands how the world works at a higher level than humans, would earn humans' trust and could seem worthy of worship.

Of course, none of that guarantees that such a trusted AI god might not decide to eliminate the human race.

What's more, the God Christians worship is more than a source of super-intelligence. He is also a God of love and God's love sometimes overrides even his anger at our sins. Compassion is far more than IQ.

John Brandon, the author of the *VentureBeat* article added this:

As a Christian myself, it's hard to imagine ever worshipping a bot that lacks any real personality, wisdom or ability to become relevant and personal, no matter how much more intelligent it is than any human. An AI god would be cold and impersonal, an intellectual "being" that's not capable of love or emotion.

Will people actually worship the AI god? The answer is obvious -- they will. We tend to trust and obey things that seem more powerful and worthy than ourselves. The GPS in your car is just the most obvious example. But we also trust Alexa [an electronic search device] and Cortana [a bot]; we trust Google. When an AI becomes much more powerful, in 25 to 50 years, there is a

great possibility that it will be deified in some way. (Apple and Google loyalists already have a religious fervor.)

If an AI god does emerge, and people do start worshipping it, there will be many implications about how this AI will need to be regulated ... or even subdued. Hang on for the ride.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Deus Ex Machina: Former Google Engineer Is Developing an AI God. *The Guardian*](#)
[Ex-Googler Sets Up His Own Futuristic Church and Is Creating an AI God for You to Worship. *BetaNews*](#)

[The Engineer at the Center of a Bombshell Uber Lawsuit Has Founded a Religion That Worships an AI God. *Business Insider*](#)

[God Is a Bot, and Anthony Levandowski Is His Messenger. *Wired*](#)

[An AI God Will Emerge by 2042 and Write Its Own Bible. Will You Worship It? *VentureBeat*](#)
[Where Will Artificial Intelligence Lead Us? *Bill's 'Faith Matters' Blog*](#)

The Big Questions

1. What attributes of God make him worthy of your worship? Why?
2. Do you think AI will ever be able to exercise intuition, gut hunches, compassion or leaps of faith? Why or why not? Will they ever be able to *appear to* do these things? Why or why not? What is so unique to humankind that it can never be replicated in any invention?
3. When, if ever, are we justified in starting a new religion? Why? How do you define a new religion? Is it an offshoot of an existing one? Is breaking away from the faith of your childhood or youth akin to joining a new religion?
4. What characteristics or demands of God might make some people open to switching loyalties to an AI god?
5. Compare and contrast trusting GPS and trusting God

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Proverbs 3:5

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. (No context needed.)

This is a verse that perhaps seems could be used to support the worship of an AI god, especially if the AI knowledge exceeds that of all humankind. Then there'd be no need to rely on one's own insight. But the alternative offered by the proverb is to trust in the LORD, not some artificial brain.

Besides, we already have a lot of knowledge at our disposal, and the amount is growing rapidly. Buckminster Fuller created the "Knowledge Doubling Curve"; he noticed that until 1900 human knowledge doubled approximately every century. By the end of World War II knowledge was doubling every 25 years. Today things are not as simple as different types of knowledge have different rates of growth. For example, nanotechnology knowledge is doubling every two years and clinical knowledge every 18 months. But on average human knowledge is doubling every 13 months. According to IBM, the build-out of the "internet of things" will lead to the doubling of knowledge every 12 hours. Yet, despite all that knowledge, we still have cruelty, crime and chaos in the world. Who's to say that more knowledge would cure those things? Knowledge is not morality.

Questions: What are shortcomings of knowledge? Why is the growth of knowledge not solving our social and justice problems? Would more knowledge help us solve our problems? Would it take better interpretation of our existing knowledge?

Psalm 115:4-8

*Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands.
They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see.
They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell
They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk;
they make no sound in their throats.*

Those who make them are like them; so are all who trust in them. (For context, read 115:1-18.)

The psalmist is here referring to the shortcoming of idols, that which makes them no gods at all. And he speaks scornfully of those who trust in the idol.

Questions: Might these verses apply to AI gods, who unlike idols, do appear to "think" and "reason"? Why or why not?

What would be your standard or test to determine if an AI device was experiencing actual feelings or only imitating our response? (In *The Bicentennial Man* by Isaac Asimov, a robot's willingness to incorporate circuits that degrade so that it was possible for it to die finally qualifies it as human.)

Isaiah 43:10

You are my witnesses, says the LORD and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. (For context, read 43:8-13.)

Here God declares there was no god before him, and there shall be none after him. That doesn't leave room for AI to take on deity status.

There's no suggestion that the AI devices would seek that status, but only that we mortals might look upon such sources of intelligence as worthy of our trust. Still, Levandowski's move to set up a religion based on an AI god does raise questions about how we define God.

Questions: How do you define God? Is there any logic in what Levandowski has done? If so, what is it? Do you think that Levandowski is serious in his endeavor or is this an attempt to mock or downgrade religion in general?

1 John 4:16

So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. (For context, read 4:7-21.)

The clear biblical affirmation is that God is love. Contrast that with John Brandon's comment from the *VentureBeat* article that "An AI god would be cold and impersonal, an intellectual 'being' that's not capable of love or emotion."

Questions: What is the most important thing you personally know about God? How did you discover that?

2 Chronicles 1:10

Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of yours?" (For context, read 1:7-13.)

In the scripture, "knowledge" and "wisdom" are not synonyms, but are often coupled together. The Hebrew word for knowledge means to ascertain by seeing, with "seeing" used in a variety of senses -- figurative, literal, euphemistic and inference (including observation, care, recognition; and causative: instruction, designation, punishment. The Hebrew for wisdom implies skillfulness in the application of knowledge.

The verse above is from Solomon's prayer at the time he received the throne of Israel, and God granted him both qualities.

Questions: AI systems have knowledge; will they be able to attain wisdom? Why or why not? What are the dangers of knowledge without wisdom?

For Further Discussion

1. Respond to this: British mathematician Alan Turing (1912-1954) suggested a test that any machine would have to pass before it could be considered to possess true intelligence, as follows: The claimant to artificial intelligence would be concealed behind a screen and questions be directed to it by someone who does not know whether a computer or a human being is there. The answers would be printed on a tape or given by some other means that would not clue the questioner by appearance, sound of voice or other incidental features. If the computer could answer all questions in such a way that the questioner could not tell that the respondent was not a human being, the AI machine would have to be considered intelligent in the same way that we are.

A recent [tech article](#) tells how it is now possible that when you are having a discussion/argument on Twitter that you may actually be conversing with a bot (automated computer) and not a real person. In many cases you cannot tell the difference and they are getting very close to successfully passing the Turing test. It is suspected that there are already entities that are trying

to influences our culture and politics using these methods. At this point the bots are being directed by a human but at some point as the AI advances it may no longer need a human. The article referenced an effort by the University of Dundee that is working on training computers to beat you in an argument.

If AI devices become indistinguishable from human beings, will they need redemption and salvation, as we do?

2. Consider this, from TWW team member John Coulson: "As an engineer involved in the automation and technology field, the goal has always been to make the decision making very deterministic. That is when presented with a given situation, the robot or computer always comes to the same decision. The engineer decides the best way to make the product and the computer/robot is programmed to make the product the same way every time. That is very desirable when assembling a car, smartphone or a pharmaceutical drug. It would be unacceptable for the item to be different every time it was made. With AI, you are ceding that control to a self-learning computer. Theoretically, the AI will learn the best way and then use that decision. By its very nature it is no longer deterministic. A concern is that if you have AI determine what is the best method to do something you are no longer in control of the decision-making process and it may not use the same priorities to determine what is the best decision. Who/what gets to decide what are the priorities that an AI system would use? The classic example is a self-driving car determining if it should crash your vehicle potentially killing you, in order to save a person crossing the street in front of you. Does this concern you that an AI system may someday be making decisions that could affect your life?"

3. Comment on this, from TWW team member Mary Sells: "What is the reason one would seek to have a new godhead? If we look at our behavior whenever we desire a human relationship change, in my opinion the reasons all kind of end up at 'the current one isn't very satisfying.' Perhaps we as Christians who want to share the love and mercy of God are not doing enough to expose the real God to seekers, therefore making an AI godhead an attractive option. The Bible of course is clear on who is and is not the one true God."

4. Some have argued that as AI advances and becomes in control of itself it might be considered a new, and maybe superior, life form. Can you foresee a day when humans will no longer be the most intelligent life forms on the planet? What does that mean for the human race? Assuming AI does someday become more intelligent than all human beings combined, will that mean there is nothing left that is unique to humankind? Why or why not?

Responding to the News

This is a good time to consider why you trust and worship God.

Prayer

Caroline Cerveny, SSJ-TOSF created this contemporary take on St. Francis' well-known prayer, Canticle of the Creatures. We suspect, however, that given how technology is sometimes misused to support dark deeds or just pure meanness, many of us would want to add some qualifiers to this prayer. Do that as group, and then pray together the resulting revision.

We praise You, Lord, for all your digital world,
especially for Brother Blog,
who is the gift through whom you give us conversation.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
of you Most High, he bears your likeness.
We praise you, Lord, for Twitter,
in the heavens you have made the tweet short, quick, and easy.
We praise you, Lord, for Brothers LinkedIn and Flickr,
professional and a sea of networks,
by which you cherish the photos of what you have gifted us with.
We praise you, Lord, for Sister Facebook,
filled with family and friends, news, and connections all across the globe.
We praise you, Lord, for Sister Earth,
who sustains us
with her fruits, colored flowers, and herbs.

Other News This Week

Destruction of Communication Infrastructure Hinders Recovery in Puerto Rico

In the News

When Puerto Rico was struck by two hurricanes during September (Irma on the 6th and Maria on the 20th), the island was devastated. So far, the death toll stands at 34, but officials fear that figure may well rise as many of the more than 3.4 million U.S. citizens in the territory struggle to cope with lack of water, food, power, fuel, shelter and essential medical care.

Federal and local officials have come under criticism for what some call a slow response to the needs of the people.

Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rosselló said normal telecom infrastructure throughout the 78 municipalities was pummeled by the hurricanes, hampering coordination of damage assessment and emergency response teams. Nearly 100 percent of cell towers were still not operational last Saturday.

The authorities are seeking alternate, sometimes old-school methods of communication, such as equipping cars and helicopters with loudspeakers, sending runners to deliver messages by hand and in person, securing satellite phones, relying on word-of-mouth, and using short-wave radio.

"Cell, internet, TV, landline -- everything was down," Mikol Hoffman, a San Juan business consultant, said. "For literally days, the only form of communication for 90 percent of the island was a single radio station, WAPA, that was broadcasting nonstop, 24 hours."

The station relayed messages from residents to loved ones they were unable to contact directly as well as requests for assistance.

Others used whatever they had to help others in whatever way they could.

Zuania Capó and her husband charged their cell phone batteries in their car as they drove to and from remote areas, volunteering to use their working cell phone to relay messages to people for residents who didn't have a connection.

Rosselló acknowledged that some residents may not access the help they need simply because they are not receiving information due to the breakdown of communication.

But the loss of routine methods of communication wasn't all bad. "I met my neighbors for the first time," Hoffman said. "I met more neighbors in two days than I have in two years."

Communication was hampered not only by physical barriers such as roads blocked by fallen trees and debris left by the hurricanes, but also by comments some officials made that others perceived as tone-deaf at best and callous at worst.

On Thursday September- 28, acting Department of Homeland Security Secretary Elaine Duke called the federal response "a good news story in terms of our ability to reach people and the limited number of deaths that have taken place in such a devastating hurricane."

Mayor of San Juan, Carmen Yulin Cruz, shot back: "This is, damn it, this is not a good news story. This is a 'people are dying' story. This is a 'life-or-death' story."

President Donald Trump, who visited the island with the First Lady on Tuesday, replied that Puerto Ricans "want everything to be done for them when it should be a community effort."

Kathleen Blanco, who was governor of Louisiana when Hurricane Katrina struck in 2005, reflected on what she learned from that experience: "When people are in pain because of a disaster, leaders need to acknowledge that pain. Don't take it personally. It's not personal, it's pain. Acknowledge the pain, but try to get the resources there."

Mayor Cruz said one man pleaded with her: "Tell the world we're here."

"If anyone can hear us," she told reporters last Friday, "Help." Her eyes welled with tears. "People are dying in this country. I am begging, begging anyone that can hear us, to save us from dying."

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Radio, Word of Mouth, and the Fleeting Cell Signal: How Puerto Rico Struggled to Communicate After Hurricane Maria. *New York Magazine*](#)
[Puerto Rico Governor Blames Communication Problems for Slow Relief Efforts. *Mother Jones*](#)
[As Puerto Rico Struggles to Recover from Hurricane Maria, US Rushes in Military](#)

Assets.nola.com

[Lack of Communication Endangers the Lives of People in Puerto Rico. Metro USA](#)
[Officials Describe "Apocalyptic" Conditions in Puerto Rico, Where Residents Lack Water, Electricity, Communication. KTLA.com](#)

The Big Questions

1. What might block communication with God?
2. If I'm not able or willing to talk to God, or to listen to God, can I still receive aid from God? Explain.
3. If communication with God is blocked, how can it be restored? What can you do in such a situation?
4. If communication with people is blocked or broken, what needs to happen to restore it? What is the role of the community of believers in helping to restore lines of communication?
5. Why does it sometimes take something like a natural disaster (or a snowstorm, funeral or unusual event) to prompt us to connect or reconnect with a neighbor, friend or family member?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Genesis 11:6-9

And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. (For context, read 11:1-9.)

This passage tells the story of humans' attempt to build for themselves a city to "make a name" for themselves, and what we call the Tower of Babel "with its top in the heavens" (v. 4), which was abandoned when people started speaking different languages and could no longer understand each other.

In the first account of creation, God gives humankind this command: "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:27-28). The building of the city and tower was an act of disobedience of that command.

Questions: Why did the people not want to "be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth" (v. 4)? Why did the Lord object to the people of earth all having "one language and the same words" (v. 1)? What happens when communication fails?

What are some positive and negative aspects of humanity being scattered over the earth and the multiplicity of languages?

Acts 2:4-8

All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?" (For context, read 2:1-13.)

After Jesus ascended into heaven, his followers waited in Jerusalem for the Spirit he promised to send them (John 16:7, 13). On the day of Pentecost, the promise was fulfilled. One of the signs of the Spirit was that the believers were granted the ability to speak in various languages "about God's deeds of power" (v. 11).

It is worth noting that the Spirit does not remove the distinctive languages put into place in Genesis 11. Even so, the communication barriers those languages had presented before no longer divide the people, who all hear the same good news in their respective dialects.

Questions: How does the day of Pentecost answer the attempt to build the Tower of Babel? How does the work of the Holy Spirit overcome miscommunication and misunderstanding that separate and divide people? When have you seen the Spirit overcome communication barriers in your own experience?

Matthew 27:45-46

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (For context, read 27:38-50.)

Perhaps the most heartbreaking breakdown in communications in the Bible comes in the crucifixion story, when Jesus, quoting Psalm 22, cries out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Jesus knew very well what it felt like to have communications cut off. This he endured for the joy of restoring the broken lines of communication between God and humanity.

Isaiah 59:1-2 tells us:

*See, the LORD's hand is not too short to save,
nor his ear too dull to hear.
Rather, your iniquities have been barriers
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.*

By taking our sin upon himself (Isaiah 53:5-6) and becoming sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21), he removed the barriers that stood between us and God, so that we might be made right with God.

Questions: When have you felt distant from God, as if your prayers hit the ceiling and go no further? When have you longed to hear God's voice, only to experience what seemed like an eternal silence from God? What do you imagine it was like for Jesus, who had never been separated from his Father before, to feel forsaken by God? What does it mean to you to know he endured that separation from God with you and for you?

Proverbs 15:1, 4, 23, 30

*A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger. ...
A gentle tongue is a tree of life,
but perverseness in it breaks the spirit. ...
To make an apt answer is a joy to anyone,
and a word in season, how good it is! ...
The light of the eyes rejoices the heart,
and good news refreshes the body. (For context, read 15:1-4, 22-30.)*

In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, some leaders made statements that were perceived as harsh or negative by some of those struggling to cope with the disaster. Whatever the speakers' intentions were at the time, their words stirred up anger and caused pain to people who were already hurting.

It shouldn't surprise us that when people are going through trauma, sometimes they may express their pain in sharp words. The wise leader doesn't take criticism or hard questions personally at such a time, but "ponders how to answer" (v. 28) in such a way that the people who are suffering can begin to heal.

Questions: When have you spoken harshly and stirred up anger, intentionally or unintentionally? If you had it to do over again, how might you frame your speech differently so as not to provoke wrath?

When have you been grateful for someone else's "soft answer" that dissolved your own anger? How is it that "a gentle tongue" has the power to become "a tree of life"? How does "good news refresh the body" as well as the soul?

Ephesians 4:29, 31-32

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. ... Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. (For context, read 4:25-32; see also Colossians 4:5-6.)

In addition to the logistical problems presented by the loss of communication infrastructure in Puerto Rico, people have struggled with how to express their honest feelings about the crisis in ways that did not cause more pain and misunderstanding.

Paul counsels the Ephesians to endeavor always to speak truthfully and graciously to others, treating them as "neighbors" and as "members of one another" (v. 25).

His words echo Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, who was a neighbor who showed mercy to the injured man by caring more for his needs than he did for his own (Luke 10:29-37). The reference to "members of one another" recalls Paul's use of the metaphor of the different parts of the body that care for each other, to represent members of the church who care for other members who are different from themselves (Romans 12:4-5).

Questions: If you were a victim of a natural disaster, or suffering for some other reason, what kind of message would you want to hear? What words would give you grace? What sort of words would be useful to build up a devastated community?

How can you avoid "rubbing salt in the wounds" of hurting people in the way you talk?

For Further Discussion

1. Comment on this from TWW team member Malia Miller: "I teach a counseling internship at a local Christian university. One of their assignments is to complete a service-learning project to engage students in teachable moments about what they can do to make an impact in the world and why it is important to do so.

"The interns are so moved by the desire of their students to help in any way, and we discussed how children are less likely to be jaded in their perspective of the significance of their efforts. Whether they are gathering needed supplies to be sent to these areas or raising funds for others to do so, they forge ahead. The interns see the efforts as so minimal, but are sustained by the students' collective enthusiasm. They feel blessed and motivated to do what they can knowing God does not measure our impact, but our intent. Needless to say, I am overwhelmed with how I can make a dent in the devastation in PR, yet God tugs at me to do something."

2. Discuss this anonymous quote: "I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant."

3. A father took his son on a fishing trip. The boy hated it but wasn't sure how to tell his father how he felt. So he wrote him a note saying he really wanted to go home. His father put the note in his pocket and said nothing about it. To the boy's chagrin, they fished several more days. Upon returning home, the lad poured out his frustration to his mother, hurt and angry that his father had ignored his note and seemed to care so little about his feelings. He was dumbfounded when his mother informed him that his father couldn't read.

Discuss how misunderstanding and miscommunication are related. What happens when we make judgments based on incomplete or inaccurate information? How might our attitudes change if we assume we may not have all the facts, and determine to give the other person the benefit of the doubt?

4. The fact that Puerto Rico is an island no doubt compounds the isolation residents must feel. While volunteers could drive to help people in need in Texas or Florida, that option was not available in this case, since the only way to get to Puerto Rico is by plane or boat. Neither of

these is an easy option for the average person who wants to help. How can you help people when the normal methods are not available? Have you ever had to think "outside the box" to find a way to help others? What is the most creative, unusual way you have ever assisted someone in trouble?

Responding to the News

1. Listen to "[Talk to One Another](#)," a song about communication from Brown Bannister. When have you allowed "little splinters" of angry, sharp words to fester beneath the surface until they caused lingering bitterness in your heart and a problem in a relationship with someone? Name a few things that can cause communication to break down between people,

How can a humble spirit improve the chances of developing better communication? What would it take to grow in humility? How can you take down walls that block communication "stone by stone" to make it possible to "build a bridge between hearts"?

2. Find out how your church is responding to the crisis in Puerto Rico, and consider how you might participate in the relief effort.

Prayer

Father God, may we learn from your Son who is gentle and humble of heart how to give soft answers that turn away wrath. May your Spirit produce in us the fruit of gentleness that produces life-giving words to the broken-hearted. May the words we speak be appropriate and apt, bringing joy and solace to those who hear them. Amen.

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Attachments area

Preview YouTube video Talk To One Another - Brown Bannister (With Lyrics)



