

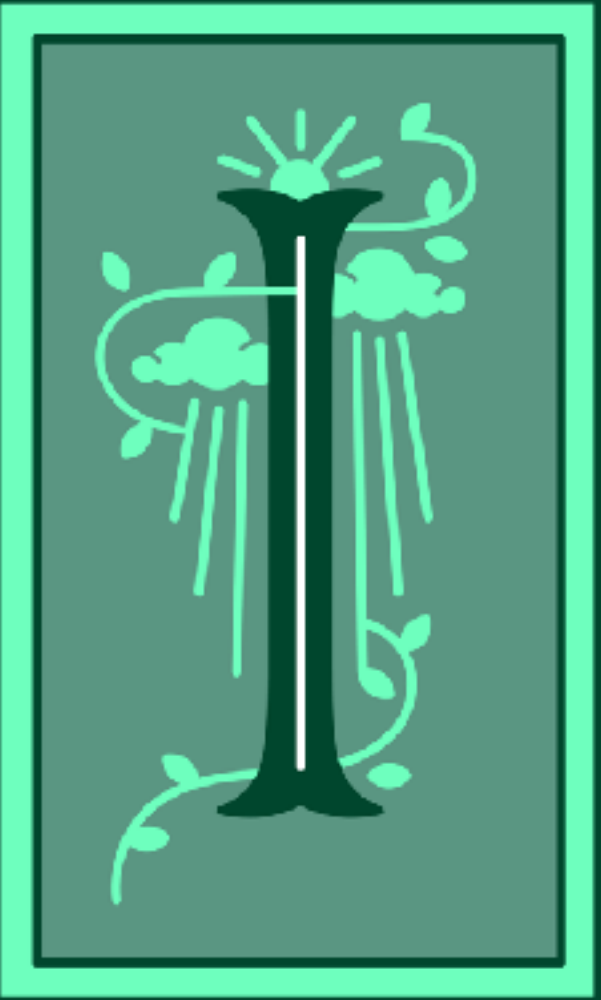
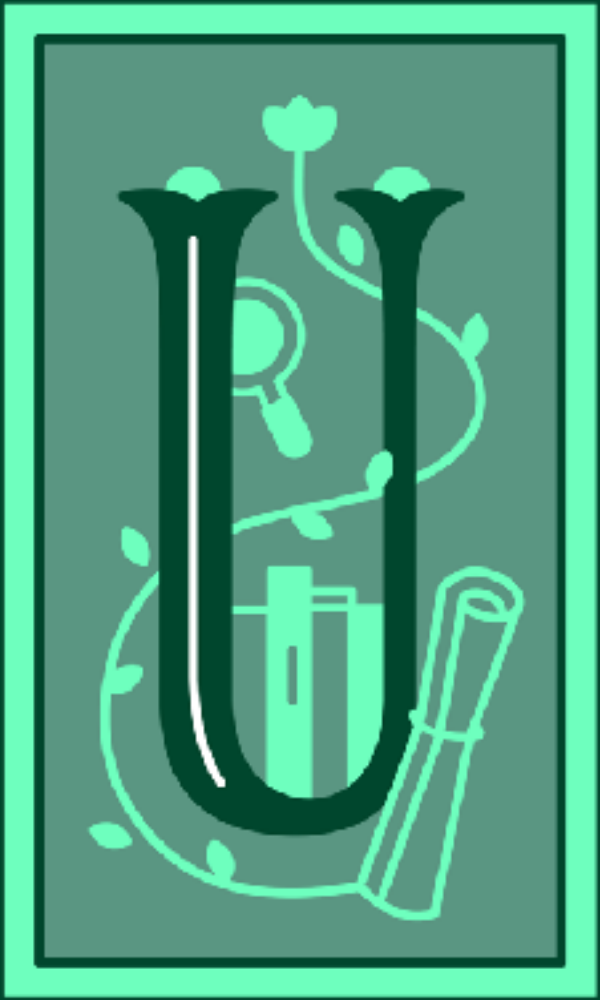
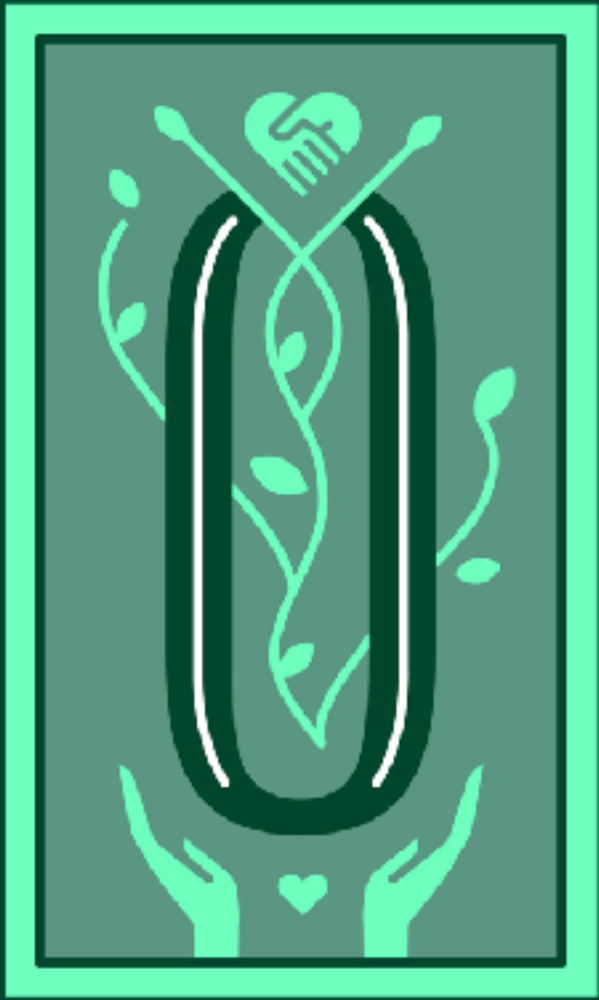
Love God & Neighbor

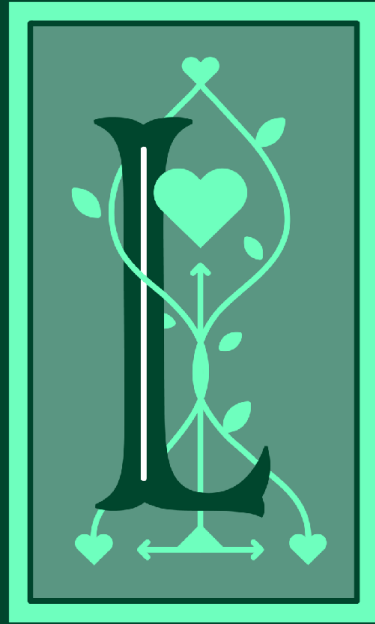
*Faith & Flourishing in Politics
- Sunday School Discussion*

Rev. Jonathan M. Romig - Fall 2021

Our Garden Hedge:

1. **Listen Well** - We don't have all the answers so let's ask what others think, really try to hear each other out, and let others finish their thoughts.
2. **Speak with Brevity & Focus** - Let's leave space for others to participate and stay on track ("Keep to our hedge").
3. **Practice Gentle Courage** - Let's be bold and share our thoughts and ideas, point to what we believe the Scripture and wisdom says, and yet do so with a gentle and humble spirit.
4. **Keep Praying** - Let's pray in preparation, silently while we discuss, and to get the class started. We need the Holy Spirit!





Love God & Neighbor

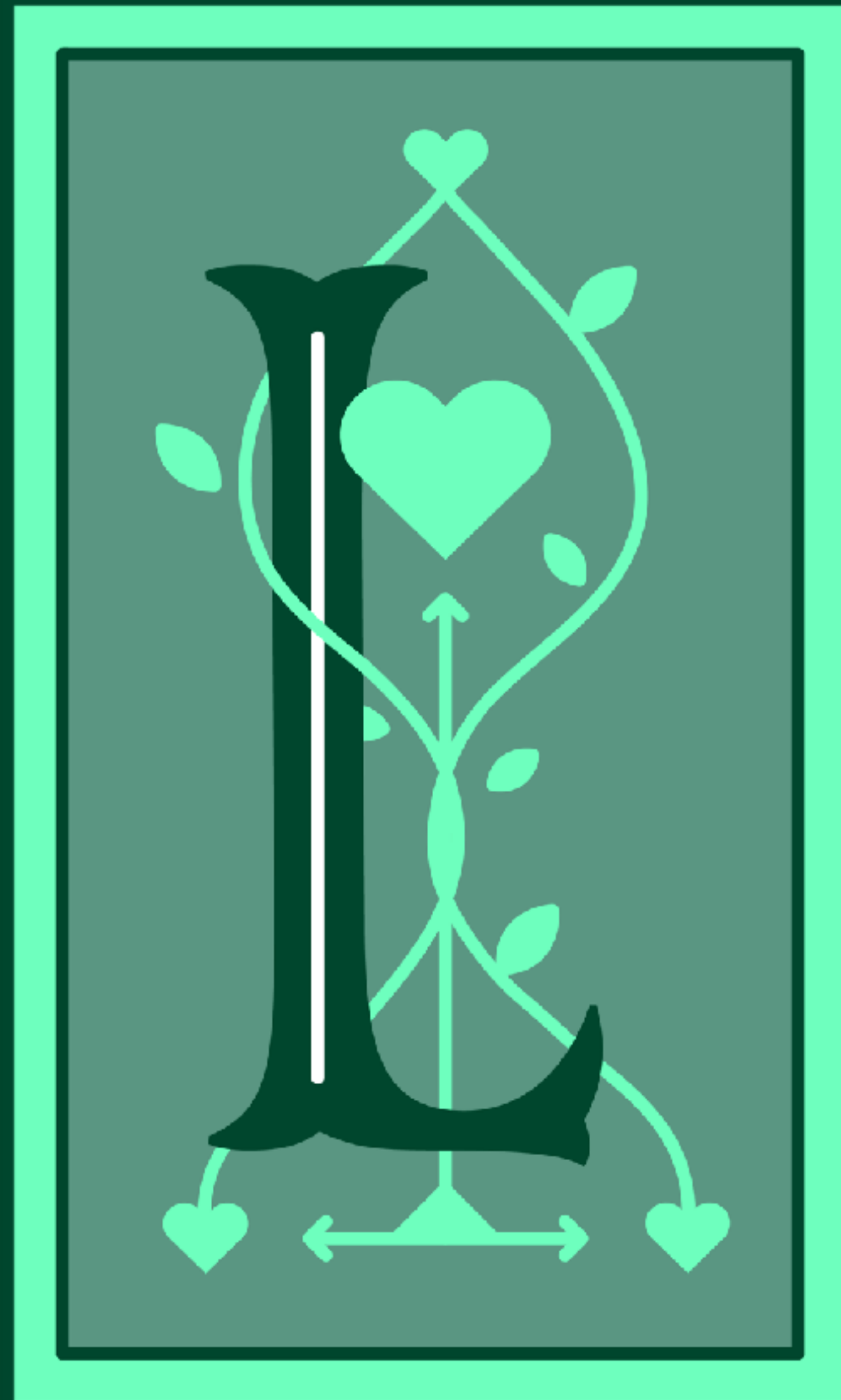
Matthew 22:35-40 (ESV)

35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

“It may seem counterintuitive, if not downright implausible, that voting Democrat or Republican could change something as personal as our relationship with God. But over the course of our lives, political choices tend to come first, religious choices second.”

Michele Margolis, “When Politicians Determine Your Religious Beliefs,” *The New York Times*, July 11, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/11/opinion/religion-republican-democrat.html>.

Do you sense any truth in this idea? Do you think your politics has shaped your faith? How so?



Does loving God
first matter for
the way we
engage in the
world? Why?

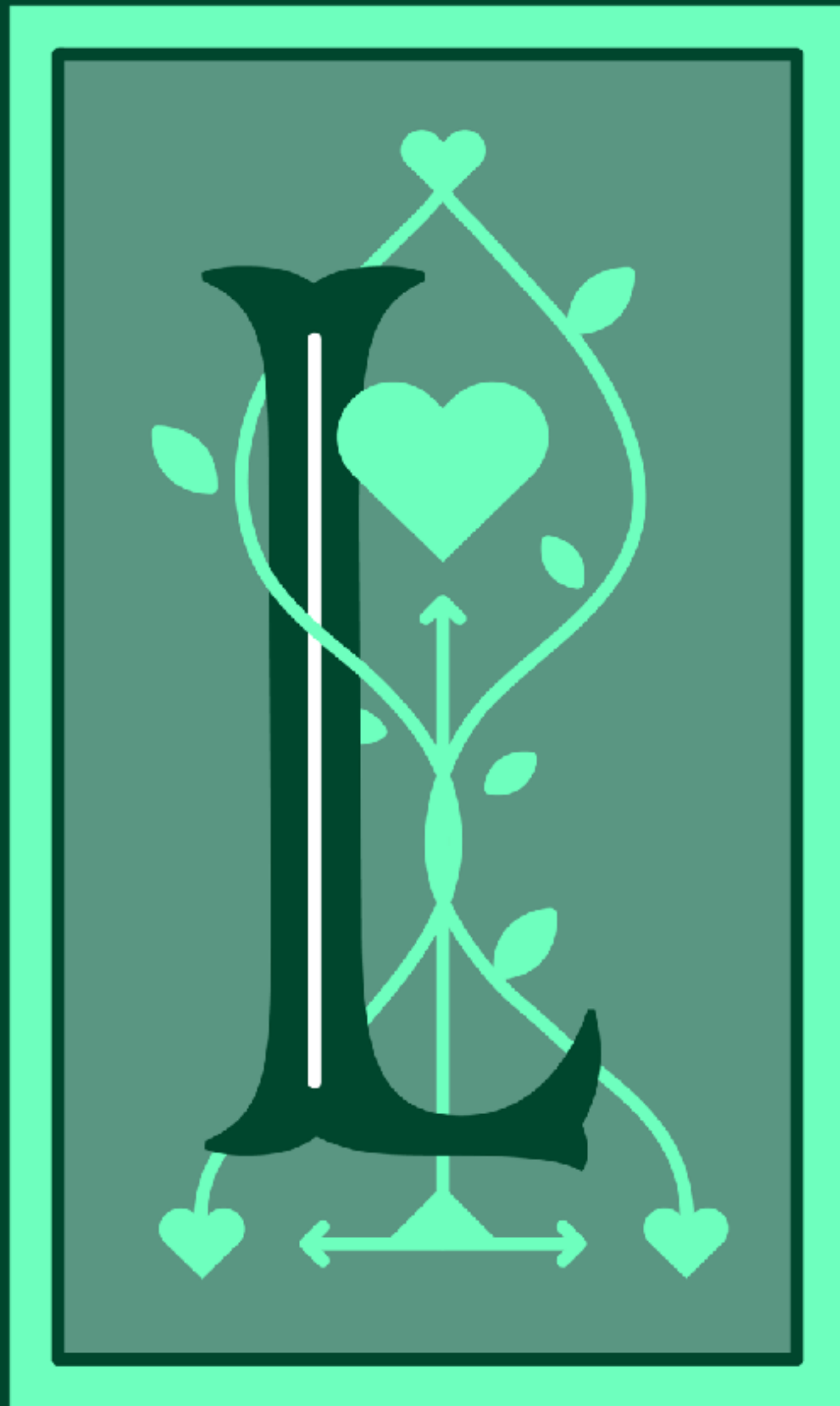
“The supreme good that makes human beings truly happy—in my terminology, the proper content of a flourishing life—consists in love of God and neighbor and enjoyment of both.”

Miroslav Volf, *A Public Faith: How Followers of Christ Should Serve the Common Good* (Ada, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2011) 48, Kindle.

“While our relationships to chocolate chip cookies and football teams can certainly dishonor God, perhaps we’ve watered down the language of idolatry to the point where we miss the real idols. Political participation has a unique ability to inspire idolatry in people precisely because it so often involves promises of protection and provision, requires sacrifices, legitimizes authority, and inspires submission and worship.”

Kaitlyn Schiess, *The Liturgy of Politics: Spiritual Formation for the Sake of our Neighbor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020) 35, Kindle.

Do you think politics are prone to creating idols? Why or why not? What might our political idols be?



What might it mean
to love our neighbors
before ourselves in
our political
engagement?

“Politics should be done out of a desire for the common good, out of service to our fellow citizens. It should be a manifestation of our love for our neighbors.”

Bruce Riley Ashford, *Letters to An American Christian* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2018) chap. 25, Kindle.

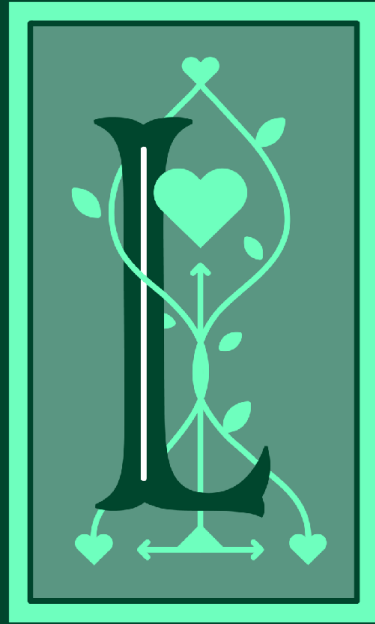
I conclude that Jesus' command that “you shall love your neighbor as yourself” means that I should seek the good of my neighbors in every aspect of society, including seeking to bring about good government and good laws.

Wayne Grudem, *Politics – According to the Bible: A Comprehensive Resource for Understanding Modern Political Issues in Light of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2010) 48, Kindle.

The most important thing is not what you decide inside the voting booth, but how you love your neighbors once you leave it.”

Skye Jethani, *The Voting Booth: A new vision for Christian engagement in a post-Christian culture* (self-published) chap. “Act 3,” Kindle.

Question: Do you think this is true? Why or why not?



Love God, Neighbor, Enemy

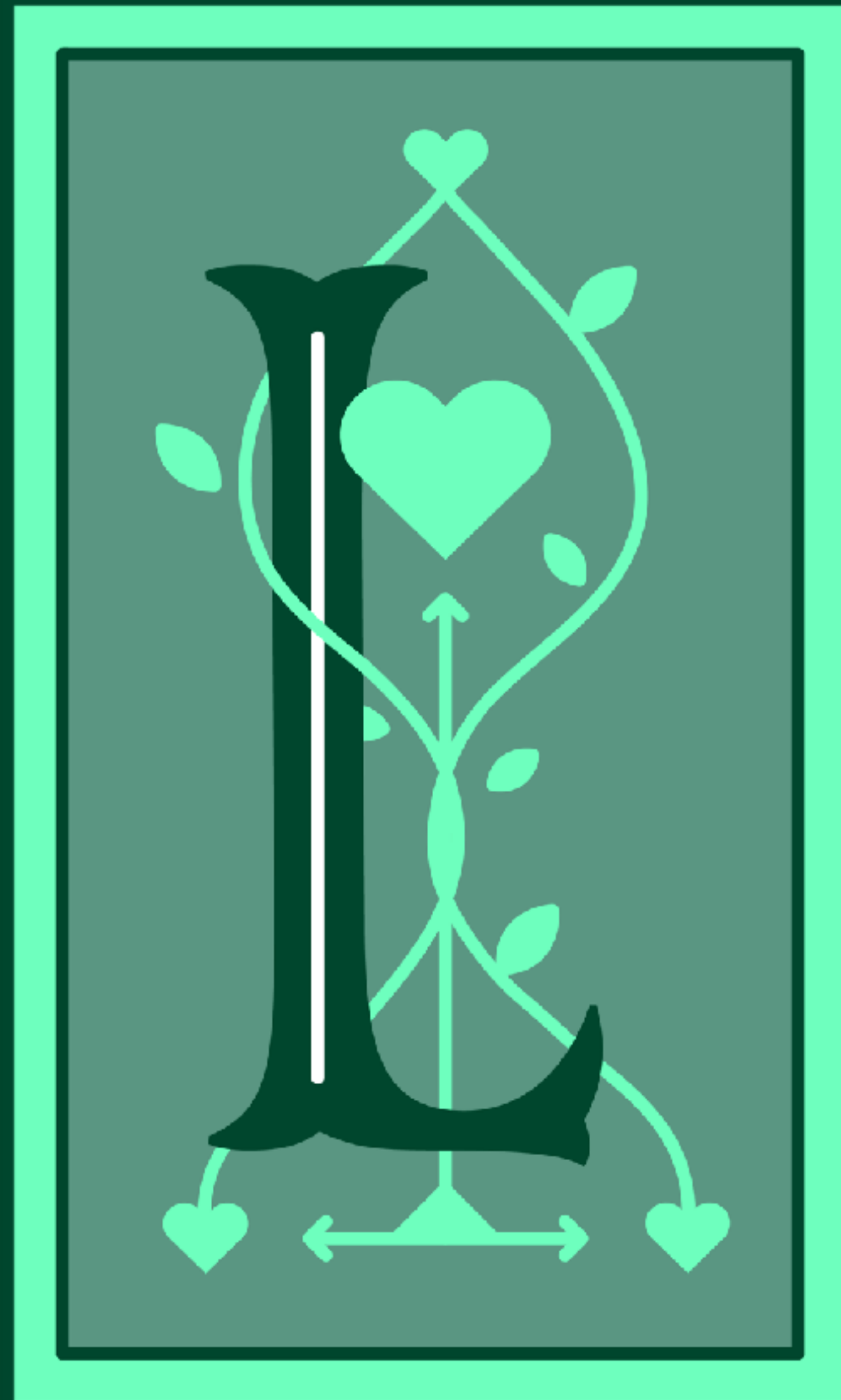
Matthew 5:43-44 (ESV)

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

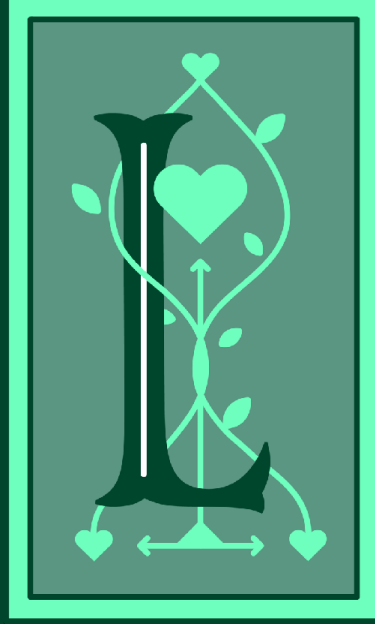
“Jesus’s command to “love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44) was quoted by ten different writers in twenty-eight different passages, making it the most cited passage by early Christian writers before Constantine. Loving one’s enemies was the ethical heartbeat of early Christianity. It’s what separated Christians from everyone else ...”

“A person who chooses to love his or her enemies can have no enemies. That person is left only with neighbors.”

Preston Sprinkle, *Fight: A Christian Case for Non-Violence* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2013) 162, 124 Kindle.



What does it mean
to love our enemies
in politics?

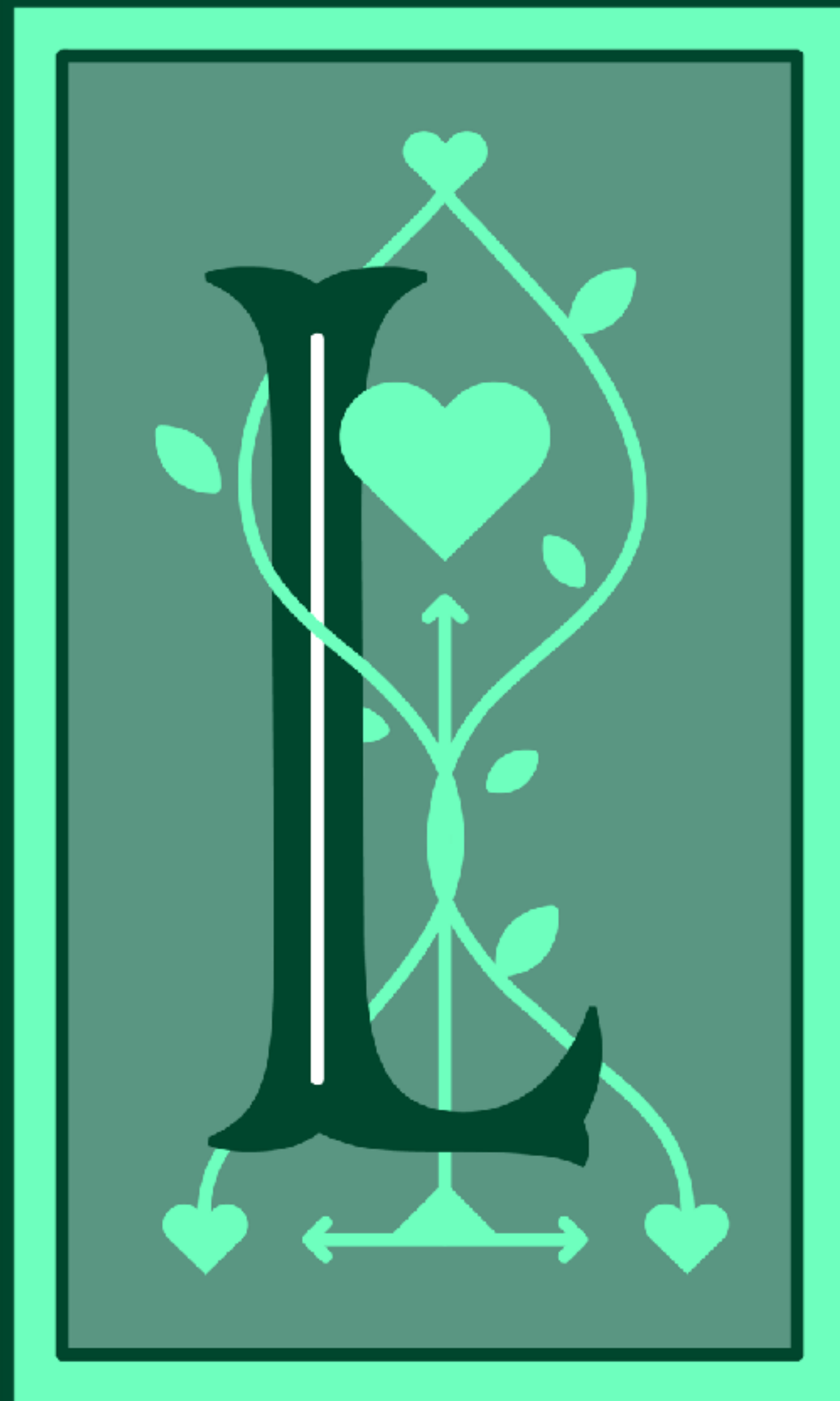


Love God, Neighbor, Enemy

Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We remember our true threat is not people but powers.



Let's close by
praying to love God
and neighbor more,
and our political
enemies too.

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