

Study questions for the introduction and Chapter 1:

1. Cone states, “Unfortunately, during the course of 2,000 years of Christian history, this symbol of salvation [the cross] has been detached from any reference to the ongoing suffering and oppression of human beings...” (page xiv-xv)

- Do you agree that modern Christians have turned away from seeing the cross as a site of suffering and oppression? What has the cross symbolized and oppression?
- Does a collective lack of remembrance lead to the “fraudulent perspective ...of the meaning of the Christian gospel for this nation” as Cone claims?

2. Do we sometimes forget that the Cross is a paradox because it “inverts the world’s value system with the news that hope comes by way of defeat”? (p. 2)

- Had you ever considered the parallels between Christ’s agony on the cross and the suffering of lynching victims, or other state-sanctioned acts of violence?
- Does reading even this far in the book renew your understanding of the cross?

3. Using the loose definition of a lynching on p. 3 (“Lynching was an extra-legal punishment sanctioned by the community.”) can you think of an example of a modern-day lynching?

4. Cone says, “this dialectic of despair and hope defined Black existence” (p.14).

- Can you think of situations today that embody this?
- What are some contemporary situations for the Black community that might parallel the lynching era?

5. The classic question of theodicy - if God is good, why does suffering exist – takes on special poignancy when considering the plight of Black people in the era of lynching.

- What became the refuge and comfort for them during this time?
- Are there contemporary examples of this kind of refuge?

Adapted from the Baltimore Presbytery Lenten Study & The Centre for Reconciliation, Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island