

Book Study questions for Chapters 3 & 4

Chapter 3

1. The following are quotes from sermons or letters written by Dr. Martin Luther King:
“...when Jesus fell and stumbled under that cross, it was a black man [Simon of Cyrene] that picked it up for him” (82) “this is the cross that we must bear for the freedom of our people...this suffering...will in some little way serve to make Atlanta a better city, Georgia a better state and America a better country...I have faith to believe it will...Our suffering is not in vain.” (81)
 - King frequently drew parallels between the suffering of black people and the suffering of Jesus on the cross, but here he compares black suffering to Simon picking up Jesus’ cross and carrying it to Calvary. How much had you learned about the struggles of Simon? Were you taught that Simon was black or of African descent?
 - Simon was compelled by the Romans to take up Jesus’ cross. If the cross is the sins of others, what are the crosses that King suggests that black Americans bear? Who else might bear these crosses?
 - If bearing the Cross is both an act of love and an act that one is compelled to do, how does that enhance your understanding of the meaning of the cross and its weight?
2. Cone engages in an extensive explication of MLK, Jr.’s view of suffering.
 - Do you agree that suffering can be transformed into a creative force? (p. 86)
 - Could giving value to suffering help to legitimize it? (p. 92)
 - Does this tension help us better understand the Cross and the hope it provides?

Chapter 4

1. In response to Without Sanctuary, the U.S. Senate issued an apology to the families of
of
the more than 5,000 lynching victims for failing to enact anti-lynching legislation 105 years ago. Cone says, “An apology, although important and welcomed by many Blacks, is
is
not justice.” (p.99)
 - What problems are associated with these kinds of apologies?
 - Can you think of other ‘famous’ apologies?
 - As Christians, what do we ask as part of an apology?
2. “Where was God in these agonizing deaths? ‘Likely there ain’t no God at all... God, if He was, kept to His skies, and left us to our enemies.” (99)

- Define and discuss “theodicy” (105)
- Discuss W.E.B. Dubois’s story of Mary and Joshua. Why did this story receive a hopeful ending?
- How was Christianity used to both enslave and to free African Americans?
- How is God seen as speaking directly too and through the black experience and also turning away or ignoring the black experience at the same time?