

A Study Guide for:

The Sun Does Shine

Written By Anthony Ray Hinton

A six-week Bible Study

*Of a cultural autobiography as it relates to
forgiveness, redemption, salvation, and God's
overall love for us.*

*Prepared by the Diocesan Prison Ministry Commission for
the Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast*

2019

Outline for a Study Guide for: The Sun Does Shine

by Anthony Ray Hinton

The story of an innocent man, who wrongly convicted,
spent 30 years on Alabama's Death Row

This Guide is presented by the Prison Ministry Commission of the
Episcopal Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast

The purpose of this Study Guide is to:

- 1) Raise awareness of our parishioners to the plight of prison inmates, remembering that God loves us all equally, loving the sinner, but not the sin.
- 2) Consider the ramifications of loving the inmate, while not loving the sin. What is meant in Matthew 25 when Christ asks us to visit those in Prison, when he asks us to love others as He loves us?
- 3) Provide a back drop to the General Convention 2018's resolution D077 Repeal Death Penalty Sentence.
- 4) Place all of this in the context of God's plan for creation, especially as it relates to forgiveness, redemption, salvation, and God's overall love for us.

This Outline continues with a section on Bible Study/ Book Study conversation tenets designed to remind us before we start that different points of view are to be expected. In fact, different points of view can be a positive.

Format: Civil Discourse (It's OK to disagree)

1 Corinthians: 12 (One Body – Many Parts)

Civil discourse is engagement in conversation intended to enhance understanding. Rabbi Steve Gutow, speaking at the Episcopal Church's event Civil Discourse in America³, remarked that, "civility is simply demonstrating respect for the dignity of our fellow humans—even those humans with whom we have sharp disagreement. Civility is allowing others to speak and having the humility to admit that we may have something to learn. Civility favors truth over cheap gain, and patience over knee-jerk judgment."

Tenets for Civil Discourse

- **Respect** – Respect each person you meet and take the time to truly consider what they are saying. Respond, don't react. No blaming, shaming or attacking another person.
- **Listen Deeply** – Listen to what the person is saying, focus on the ideas presented, and discuss ideas and issues – not people. No side conversations as they distract from engagement and listening. Do not interrupt while others are speaking.
- **Speak for Yourself** – Use “I” statements when commenting or responding. Share your personal experience.
- **Try to Understand** – Try to understand the thoughts and ideas of others. Ask questions for clarification.
- **Share Talk Time** – Make sure everyone has the opportunity to speak before speaking again. Take notes if there are things you want to follow up on. Ask what others think.
- **Speak respectfully** – When you choose to speak, respect your fellow learners and do not try to be the one that knows everything about the topic at hand.
- **Gratitude** – If what someone has shared or asked helps with your own learning, say thank you.
- **Suspend Judgment** – We all have presumptions, biases, stereotypes, prejudices, and other pre-judgments. Try to suspend pre-judgments and seek to understand.
- **Disagree, Don't Debate** – We are here to learn and listen. You can disagree with someone and still love them and listen to them. This isn't about who is right, but about listening and learning together.
- **Practice Forgiveness** – We learn from trying things out and sometimes we make mistakes. Seek to forgive and to be forgiven as we learn together.
- **Pay Attention to your Feelings and Thoughts** – If you do not feel safe asking a question or commenting on a topic, write it down and ask someone to help you voice it or talk it through with you. If someone hurts your feelings because of what was said, acknowledge the comment (not the person) hurt your feelings and explain why.

Weekly reading suggestion for a six-week study

(Number of weeks can flex to fit program needs)

Part I: Pre-Death Row – A broken world

Week 1 Chapters 1-3 pages 1-36

Week 2 Chapters 4-6 pages 37-76

Part 2: Death Row – God uses Ray to help others and Ray too.

Week 3 Chapters 8-11 pages 77-118

Week 4 Chapters 12-15 pages 119-156

Part 3: God sends a champion, a gifted servant to rescue many and to inspire.

Plus practical life applications and death penalty discussions.

Week 5 Chapters 16-19 Pages 157-202

Week 6 Chapters 20-24 Pages 203-242

A short study guide is provided to facilitate discussion on each week's readings. The Study Guides are built around biblical topics with quotes from the book and the bible. The Big Ideas Weekly summaries that follow correspond to the week's study guide.

Part I: Pre-Death Row – A broken world

Big ideas-Week 1

- 1) **"Everyone did as he saw fit" Judges 21:25**
- 2) Evil...original sin.... And two sides to the story
This is a glimpse into the private lives of a large number of very different but real people.
- 3) Contrast Lester and Ray. Contrast Ray's mom and Ray. Why did Ray steal a car and write bad checks when Lester and his mother didn't?
- 4) God's overall plan...how do we.... how do all these "real" people fit? What does it mean for us? Do we/ should we/ can we like it? Must we understand, appreciate, like, or just trust and obey? God's plan for His creation, for our neighbor, for us?

Big ideas-Week 2

1) ***“Things that cause people to sin are bound to come” Luke 17:1***

Ray: “People can want to hurt you for no good reason other than you look different or talk different or live different”.

Man’s inhumanity to man is built around selfishness and fear. What else? Can recognition help us to control “it”, versus it controlling us?

2) ***“ One of them, named Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, said, ‘Don’t you realize that it is better for you to have one man die From that day on the Jewish authorities made plans to kill Jesus. John 11: 49,50,53***

Neither Ray nor Jesus were going to get a fair trial, but we see how prejudice, jealousy, anger, and hate don’t start or stop with black skin. Bob McGregor, Reggie.

3) ***“If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.” Luke 17:3***

How many times? Brother??? If he repents?

4) ***“You meant this for evil, but God used it for good” Genesis 45:7 Joseph***

Did the Lord raise up Ray for this purpose? To highlight man’s inhumanity to man in a certain part of our culture(s)? Was it God’s plan all along? Is life all about spiritual growth and loving relationships? Is it fair? In what way yes or no?

5) ***“For you have the poor always with you.” Matthew 26:11***

Why will the poor always be with us? Is there a spiritual reason why they are necessary? Did Christ mean it literally, figuratively, or spiritually...or in some sense, all of the above?

Part 2: Death Row – God uses Ray to help others and Ray too.

Big ideas-Week 3

- 1) ***“In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.” Ecclesiastes 7:15***

Why do bad things happen to good people, and good to bad?

What does this say about spiritual nature versus physical nature?

Does it matter what happens to us in this life?

What did Jesus have to say?

Ray says, “But pain and tragedy and injustice happen – they happen to us all. I’d like to believe it’s what you choose to do after such an experience that matters most – that truly changes your life forever.” Pg1

- 2) ***“Some Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God would come. His answer was...” Luke 17:20-21***

Notice the physical nature that makes Death Row hell, and also the spiritual nature of hell. Take some notes.

- 3) ***“Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I put my hope.” Psalm 130***

- 4) Ray: “I realized that the State of Alabama could steal my future and my freedom, but they couldn’t steal my soul or my humanity.... Everything, I realized, is a choice.”

Was it Love; his mother’s love, Lester’s love, God’s love, God’s hand, that brought Ray to make this change; to forgive, to love, and to look for ways to help himself and the others?

Big ideas-Week 4

- 1) ***“Praise the Lord who redeems our life from the pit and crowns us with love and compassion”. Psalm 103***

Ray is part of God’s plan for redemption for men inside and outside. How did the Holy Spirit work through Ray in ways that are foreseen in the living Bible?

Perhaps Joseph? Other thoughts?

- 2) The KKK member in Death Row for lynching – what a great expression by Ray of forgiveness, and love; of love the sinner, but not the sin.

- 3) Walter Hill – Contrast with Ray who says, “I was going to be that **KIND** voice screaming out on the row, and I was going to make it better for everyone – even Hill.”
- 4) How can the non-inmate answer God’s call to “visit those in prison” and have a positive effect?

Big ideas-Week 5

1) “Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of their enemies” Judges 2:16.

Enter Bryan Stevenson. Ray describes Bryan as a man, who after graduating with a law degree from Harvard has spent his career, his life, as a ransom for many. Does his dedication and sacrifice bring to mind the spiritual image of the suffering servant? If not Jesus, certainly a “Judge”, or Samuel, who devoted his whole life in God’s service.

2) “Render unto Caesar those things that are Caesar’s, and unto God those things that are God’s.” Matthew 22:21

What exactly does this mean? Aren’t all things God’s? Bryan worked through the “system” to free Ray. But Ray worked inside to share God’s love, laughter, and hope. What can we do to help bring God’s love into the inmates and officers? What opportunities are there for us to work on the outside to share God’s love or use our God given gifts?

3) “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another ^[a]Helper, to be with you forever— the Spirit of Truth,” John 14:16

Bryan responded to God’s call. Ray responded to God’s call, that is the call of love and purpose for our lives that is in us through the Holy Spirit.

4) “Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵for I was hungry, and you gave Me food; I was in prison and you came to Me.” Matthew 25:34, 36

Poverty, fear, selfishness, deceit, etc. are all factors in the workings of the criminal justice system. Prison ministries like Kairos and Prison Fellowship are ways that we can answer God’s call to visit those in prison. How can we help those who become involved with the criminal justice system on the outside, both before and after prison?

Big ideas-Week 6

- 1) ***Jesus said to the rich young man (“ruler”-Luke 18:18), “If you want to be perfect, go sell all your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me.” Matthew 19:16***

Those in Death Row have had to give up all. How did it change Ray? Not all are changed. Often what’s needed is a catalyst. Ray’s mom, Lester and later Bryan provided that catalyst. Ray had time, endless time, but he also needed love to allow him to concentrate on his spiritual nature, making it primary. How could you become part of that catalyst for those in prison?

- 2) ***“Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth but I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those that hurt you.” Matthew 5:38***

“Love your neighbor as yourself.” Matthew 22:39

” Love others as I have loved you.” John 15:12

Does love include forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration? How does love treat conflicts of interest, especially when it may involve taking of a life?

3-7) Episcopal Church General Convention 2018

Resolution D077 Reduce Death Penalty Sentence.

Resolution D077 challenges us to look into the spiritual and corresponding physical reasons why the death penalty should be repealed.

Ray’s story should be seen in the larger Biblical picture of God’s story of love, forgiveness, redemption, and salvation for his creation, but Ray’s innocence and the misuse of the judicial system are two of the reasons for “the long-standing principle espoused by the Episcopal Church that the death penalty should be repealed.”

Some questions to consider:

- Why has the death penalty been the norm for millennia?
- What are some of the possible consequences of eliminating the death penalty?
- What have we learned from Ray’s book that would lead us to believe that the “Hell” that Ray lived in would be better than death?
- Could it be the hope of love, forgiveness, redemption, and salvation for the incarcerated?

The Sun Does Shine – Study Guide Week 2

Chapters 4-7 pages 37-76

Topics for discussion

1) “Things that cause people to sin are bound to come” Luke 17:1

“Conviction, Conviction, Conviction, Conviction, Conviction” Lt. Acker Pg. 52

“You know, I don’t care whether you did it or didn’t do it. In fact, I believe you didn’t do it. But it doesn’t matter. If you didn’t do it, one of your brothers did. And you’re going to take the rap. You want to know why?” Lieutenant Acker Pg. 51

“People can want to hurt you for no good reason other than you look different or talk different or live different”. Ray Hinton Pg. 19

“You people don’t want the right person. All you wanted was a conviction.”
Ray Hinton Pg. 10

Thoughts

Prejudice doesn’t start or stop with black skin. The anger, jealousy, and hate that prejudice can engender is true with wops, pollacks, spics, japs, dirty Jews, Russian pigs, gringos, and whitey, etc. The same is true for economic status. Man’s inhumanity to man is built around selfishness and fear.

Questions:

- Can recognition help us to control “it”, versus “it” controlling us?
- What else? The seven deadly sins? What are they? How do we discern and how do we combat them? Is knowing what the problem is half the battle, or just a step in the right direction?
- What about the system? The prosecutor is paid to prosecute; the detective, the officers, the judges are paid to keep the public safe. How has electronic media changed the public awareness and forced change?
- Did Ray, Reggie, Lt. Acker think about the trouble that each caused in the lives of others. Why doesn’t the awareness of knowing what might happen, stop some from making choices that come back to bite? Is it the uncertainty of who might be bitten, when, how badly, and who might benefit? Is it ignorance or naivety? Can you give an example of how you have seen spiritual growth change a person?

2) "One of them, named Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year, said, 'Don't you realize that it is better for you to have one man die From that day on the Jewish authorities made plans to kill Jesus. John 11: 49,50,53

"They're not allowing the polygraph. Bob McGregor nicked(renege) on the deal." "They knew I didn't do it, but they were still going to take me to trial." Ray Pg. 62

Neither Ray nor Jesus were going to get a fair trial, but we see how prejudice, jealousy, anger, and hate don't start or stop with black skin.

Questions:

- These chapters show a mix of cultural differences and results of sin in both cultures. What does Christ want us to do? Pray? Use our gifts? Get involved in some way to have a positive effect in our culture?
- Ray's brother could have helped by hiring a real expert to refute the gun evidence, which was the only evidence that tied Ray to the two murders.

"I need him (Ray) to give me a guarantee so I'm not wasting my money."

Ray's brother Willie, Pg. 64 Did Ray's brother sin by not helping?

- Given the circumstances would you have stuck your neck out for Ray if you were his brother? How do we stick our necks out for others? Can we give any examples?

3) "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents forgive him." Luke 17:3

How many times? Brother??? If he repents?

"If I had known that it (I) had created in him (Reggie) such jealousy and rage that he was willing to lie and frame me for murder – actually put me to death over it...". Ray repented some, wished some.

"I (Ray) knew that I didn't want to be a coal miner, a deckhand, work on Saturdays or in a fast food joint". P 39 "Women were my one weakness." "I fell in and out of lust every day." P 30 "Because of me that family was torn apart for a while, and I regretted the harm that I had caused." P 68

Lt. Acker and the others knew that they were legally wrong but did not regret or hesitate.

“She loved me the same way she had loved me for as long as I could remember - absolutely and unconditionally.” P 39

Ray said this about his mom and more importantly about forgiveness. Did it matter to her? Did he always say the right things to her?

Questions:

- Was Ray’s conviction built solely on his black skin?
- Reggie is black. (Pg. 68) Something other than skin color was at work. What do you think it might be?

***“You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?”
...Jesus replies, “Everyone who drinks...the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 4:9, 14***

Questions:

How does the Holy Spirit living in you change your response? How do we ensure that we love others as Christ loves us? Love who Lord! Does it matter if we see no love in return? Must others repent to be forgiven? Forgive how many times?

4) “You meant this for evil, but God used it for good” Joseph Genesis 45:7

Questions:

- Did the Lord raise up Ray for this purpose? To highlight man’s inhumanity to man in a certain part of our culture(s)? Was it God’s plan all along?
- Is life all about spiritual growth and loving relationships: your relationship with God; your relationship with others; your relationship with yourself; your relationship with the physical nature in God’s creation? Is it fair? In what way yes or no?

5) ***"For you have the poor always with you." Matthew 26:11***

Questions:

- Why will the poor always be with us? Is there a spiritual reason why they are necessary? Did Christ mean it literally, figuratively, or spiritually – or in some sense, all of the above?
- God created all with different gifts. Is it to be expected for some to make major bad choices, to not get it unless it is learned the hard way? Perhaps different gifts lead to different needs, different approaches, different methods?
- How important is it to recognize our specific gift(s)? What does it mean for each of us? How could this help to recognize the "I was made that way" in each of us? Is it sufficient to say, "I was made that way, can't help it"? Is it sufficient to say that it is enough to raise awareness? Where do we go from here? What is entailed in **"for everyone to whom much (gifts) is given, from him much will be required"**? **Luke 12:48**
- How does my selfishness come out during the day? Who does it affect? Is an appropriate "rebuke" a form of love? What does repentance look like? Spiritually, is it important that Ray repented to his mother, Lester, and God before he was arrested?
- Why do people see things the way they do...the good, the bad, and the ugly? Why do we make bad choices and see things incorrectly? The answer lies in our incompleteness without God. Why does God put the devil amongst us? And why does He make us not only incomplete, but also why, even though God is always with us, are we able to make bad choices? Is it so that we can learn to put aside our own selfishness and learn to help and love one another?
- How does this connect with "shouldn't expect or need to make changes to society, or even a large number of people"? Ray appears to change no one positively in his pre-prison life. In the following weeks of this study we will see how he grows spiritually and in doing so affects the lives around him in prison and now have a larger effect outside. What does it mean to let go and let God?

God, we pray for your empowerment to know what to do and the help to do it.

The Sun Does Shine – Study Guide Week 3

Chapters 8-11 pages 77-118

Topics for discussion

1) “In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.” Ecclesiastes 7:15

“So it is with the good man, so it is with the sinner.” Job 9:22

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Why do bad things happen to good people, and good to bad?
Ray – “Why had (McGregor) picked me to railroad?” Pg. 78
- “There was no light in this dark place (Holman Death Row), so there was no God and no help and no hope.” “What did I ever do to God? My God had failed and left me to die. I had no use for God. Forgive me mamma.” Pg. 84, 112
- Do some in life, who are not in prison, feel this way? Try locking yourself in a bathroom or some such small (5’x7’) space for a few hours with nothing but this book, a Bible, and some paper. When you’re there, take notes about your thoughts on despair, and perhaps how you’ve dealt with it or how you’ve helped others in despair. Are their “kinds” of despair and hopelessness? Loss of a loved one; loss of health; financial loss? How do they compare to Ray’s circumstance? Can they be compared? How might they be different or similar? Terminal illness at any age? Short notice; longer term debilitating death; accident or murder of a loved one?
- “Did my life change forever the day I was arrested, or did the life changing moment happen even earlier? Was that day just the culmination of a whole series of fateful moments, poor choices, and bad luck?” Pg. 1

2) Luke 17:20-21 “Some Pharisees asked Jesus when the Kingdom of God would come. His answer was, ‘The Kingdom of God does not come in such a way as to be seen. No one will say, ‘Look, here it is! Or, there it is!’ ‘Because the Kingdom of God is within you’.”

Questions/ Thoughts:

What else did Jesus have to say about the Kingdom? Look up a few other examples of what Jesus said about the Kingdom. What did Ray say about death row? Notice the physical nature that makes it hell, and also the spiritual nature of hell. Take some notes.

Jesus often uses something in the physical world to point to a truth in the spiritual.

- What does this say about spiritual nature versus physical nature?
- How hard is it to make spiritual nature primary and physical nature secondary?
- Does it matter what happens to us in this life?

Ray says on page 1, “But pain and tragedy and injustice happen – they happen to us all. I’d like to believe it’s what you choose to do after such an experience that matters most – that truly changes your life forever.”

3) “Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; O Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy. If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness. I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word, I put my hope.” Psalm 130

“Where was God now?” “...but in that moment my heart broke wide open...This man had lost his mom, but I still had mine, and she wouldn’t care for my Bible to be collecting filth. Even here, I could still be me.” Pg. 116

Questions/ Thoughts:

Ray lost his freedom, and all he loved or owned, but he didn’t lose his mental or physical health. God left him with endowed gifts, and God empowered him to use those gifts to make Death Row better spiritually and physically. What kinds of things have made you say, “God, where are you?”

4) “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.... My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you.”

Job 42:3,5

God was always with Job – Job never lost his faith. Maybe he questioned God a bit in the midst of his tragedies (trials), but he never gave up. Job knew God and was faithful and righteous before being tested by God in such an extreme way. Job, through his trials, experiences God in a very up front and personal way, and gains a deeper, fuller, stronger faith and relationship with God.

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Do our trials often have a similar effect? How does it change who we are? How does it change our outlook, our values, and hopefully how we interact with others?
- Is reading the cook book and looking at the pictures enough? Or do we only really appreciate the recipe after we eat some? (Does the fourth piece of pie in a row taste as good as the first? The sixth, the eighth?)
- Life lessons can be subjective as well as objective. For some “one beer is too many and 100 too few”.
- Ray: “I realized that the State of Alabama could steal my future and my freedom, but they couldn’t steal my soul or my humanity.... Everything, I realized, is a choice.”
- Was it Love; his mother’s love, Lester’s love, God’s love, God’s hand, that brought Ray to make this change; to forgive, to love, and to look for ways to help himself and the others?

“Despair was a choice. Hatred was a choice. Anger was a choice. I still had choices, and that knowledge rocked me. ...Hope was a choice. Faith was a choice. And more than anything else, love was a choice. Compassion was a choice.” Pg. 115, 118

In sickness and in health, for better or for worse. Love.

The Sun Does Shine – Study Guide Week 4

Chapters 12-15 pages 119-156

Topics for discussion

- 1) ***“And they were brought low for their iniquity. Nevertheless, He regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry.” Psalm 106:43,44***

“Praise the Lord who redeems our life from the pit and crowns us with love and compassion”. Psalm 103:4

“They called all of us monsters...we weren’t a collection of innocent victims.” Ray Pg. 133

“It was hell on the row – every minute of every day – but in this hell, it could get worse.” Pg.141

With zero ventilation “it was like being in a sauna, and some days it felt like you were slow roasting. The heat made some guys crazy and even more violent.” Pg.140

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Ray is part of God’s plan for redemption for men inside and outside. How did the Holy Spirit work through Ray in ways that are foreseen in the living Bible? Perhaps the Apostle Paul, in that he had many life experiences that might have gone largely unwritten if he wasn’t in prison in Rome. The scale is smaller, but the principle is similar.
- If God can use Rahab, Ester, Naaman the Syrian general, the woman at the well, etc., how will God use our little lives, if we sincerely and repeatedly ask Him to use us?
- Is it fair that God uses (but hurts) some to help/ save many? Did God allow His son Jesus to be killed so that we might (among other things) realize that God’s plan for our life isn’t merely for each of us as individuals, but as a part of God’s family, we are responsible to a larger end with an even better outcome for all who love the Lord - perhaps even all of God’s creation?

2) *“But if a wicked man turns away from all the sins he has committed and keeps all my decrees and does what is just and right, he will surely live; he will not die.” “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?” declares the sovereign Lord. “Rather am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live.” Ezekiel 18:21,23*

“I had no anger toward Henry. He had been taught...Death row had saved his soul.” Pg. 153

Someone had taught Bennie Hays to hate.” Henry said to his dad, “He’s (Ray’s) my friend, my best friend.” Pg. 146,135

The KKK member in Death Row for lynching sees Ray as his best friend.

What a great expression by Ray of forgiveness, and love: of love the sinner, but not the sin.

Questions/ Thoughts:

“and we were beginning to learn that we could make a family out of anyone.” Pg. 147. Certainly, this is the case in the body of Christ. Take some notes about the overall truth of this idea.

- Does there need to be a willingness to see the benefit of acting like family?
- How does common ground affect the outcome?
- How can selfishness affect the outcome? What else? Bitterness? Anger?
- Ray makes a choice to become the child that his mother had taught him to be. What are the ingredients necessary for learning and value formation seen in Death Row? Ray, Henry, Walter Hill, the others in the book club?

Not all on Death Row are interested in changing. Some say, “I like doing evil, and I am going to keep doing evil.” Ezekiel talks about our choices and their consequences. The same is true whether inside prison or in society outside of prison. It is worth reading Ezekiel Chapter 18 and discussing as it relates to Ray’s decision versus Bennie Hays.”

- Can today’s society tell if a man has permanently changed during his time in prison?
- Does the death penalty keep someone from positive change?
- What are the similarities in our life and death with those on Death Row: definite death, but still indefinite in its timing?

3) ***“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Love is patient, love is kind...it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.... Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 11***

“A little bit of kindness was amplified on death row, because it was so unexpected...we were all the same here, we were all discarded like garbage and deemed unworthy to have a life. I was going to prove them wrong.” Pg. 142, 143

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Contrast Walter Hill with Ray who says, “I was going to be that **KIND** voice screaming out on the row, and I was going to make it better for everyone – even Hill.”
- Ray’s ideas and work with the warden did bear fruit. Book Club or not the opportunity for additional books for each man and covers on the meal trays were definite improvements. Talk about the value of the Book Club as an opportunity for interaction that can be educational, enlightening, and value changing.
- How do we see these interactions working in our own lives?
- How can we add interaction with others to make our own values and actions more Christ like and in doing so try to make it better for everyone?
- Is it fair to say trying is our responsibility? Making it better is God’s?

4) ***“How then can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without ... those who bring the good news? Romans 10:14,15***

“In the nearly 8 years on Death Row Michael Lindsey never had a visitor. I thought about him crying to save his life in those last days – and what it felt like to know that there was nobody to save him... he was completely alone: no love, no hope, only fear.” Pg. 100, 101

“We were all facing death, but I was facing it with love all around me.” Pg. 142

In the Book Club the group talks about favorite parts. Ray responded to Larry, "I like that it's about hope,'... 'It's like your soul can be reborn. No matter what you've done, you can be new again." Pg. 150

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Ray gives a good example of how someone with a right attitude can help make the lives of others better in prison. How can the non-inmate answer God's call to "visit those in prison" and have a positive effect?
- "Listen, Listen, Love, Love" is the Kairos Prison Ministry motto. Kairos, Prison Fellowship, as well as others attempt to bring God's love, hope, peace, and joy to those who are in need.
- Some ministry programs are instructive. Some are similar to the Book Club's "don't try to be the teacher; just talk about whatever the guys want to talk about" (pg. 153). Those who visit share God's love, and God changes lives. Various program opportunities are available.
- See the "Opportunity" page at the end of Week 6.

The Sun Does Shine – Study Guide Week 5

Chapters 16-19 pages 157-202

Topics for discussion

- 1) “Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of their enemies” Judges 2:16**

Enter Bryan Stevenson: a man, who after graduating with a law degree from Harvard, has spent his career, his life, as a ransom for many.

“He smiled at me, and I felt that same hope bloom in my heart. I knew he was sent by God.” “God sent me his best lawyer.” Pg. 169

“I learned he had a team of young lawyers, straight A students from the best law schools, working for him, and volunteering to fight the good fight.” Pg.176

“He was smarter than all, though. And God was on his side.” Pg. 182

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Make some notes of how Ray described Bryan at their first meeting. Also, make note of additional remarks as they occur.
- Does his dedication and sacrifice bring to mind the spiritual image of the suffering servant? (If not Jesus, certainly a “Judge”, or Samuel, who devoted his whole life in God’s service. He might remind us of Uriah, a warrior with a well understood purpose, a man on a mission.)
- Bryan’s God given gifts are many and he is a good example of bearing much good fruit. What might it mean, what might it look like, to be a warrior for God?

2) “Render unto Caesar those things that are Caesar’s, and unto God those things that are God’s.” Matthew 22:21

Questions/ Thoughts:

- What exactly does this mean? Aren’t all things God’s? Spiritual nature? Physical nature? “What are the gifts of the Spirit? Look up.
- Virtue has been defined as a habitual and firm disposition to do the good. Spiritual gifts empower the individual to righteousness.
- “I held up the money order Bryan had sent with his letter. I was still amazed at how selfless Bryan was. Not only didn’t he shake me down, he sent me cards and notes and money for my commissary purchases.”
- Is being selfless a life style? Do we ever feel like we would like to do something more than just study the bible? Perhaps reach out and try being selfless so often that it becomes a life style?
- How do multiple life goals lead us away from a selfless life style? Ray’s bad choices with the car and the checks, even in light of his mom’s and Lester’s good examples, highlight the allure of our desires. Strong goal choices fit into the idea that spiritual nature should be primary and physical nature secondary.

Bryan worked through the “system” to free Ray.

***“We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly.”
1Corinthians 4:12***

“It is a cruel jest to say to a bootless man that he ought to lift himself up by his own bootstraps.” MLK

Ray worked inside to share God’s love, laughter, and hope. We, also, have the opportunity to share God’s love inside prison, or outside prison, or both.

3) *"And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another ^[a]Helper, to be with you forever— the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive [and take to its heart] because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He (the Holy Spirit) remains with you continually and will be in you."*

"How are you here?" I(Ray) asked. 'How did you know about me?' Santha Sonenberg smiled at me. 'Bryan Stevenson sent me. He knows about everyone.'" Pg. 109

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Bryan responded to God's call. Ray responded to God's call, that is the call of love and purpose for our lives that is in us through the Holy Spirit.
- What are the differences of those who belong to the truth and those who don't?
- What are the effects of each, both upon each other and on themselves spiritually and physically?
- Can you give examples from normal life, everyday living?

4)*"Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ³⁵ for I was hungry, and you gave Me food; I was in prison and you came to Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or in prison, and come to You?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." Matthew 25*

"True compassion is more than flinging a coin at a beggar; it comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring." MLK

"Bryan never gave up, and I could see how hard it was on him. He carried the world on his shoulders, and there were visits where I could see the stress and strain in his eyes." Pg. 217

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Poverty, fear, selfishness, deceit, etc. are all factors in the workings of the criminal justice system. Prison ministries like Kairos and Prison Fellowship are ways that we can answer God's call to visit those in prison. How can we help those who become involved with the criminal justice system on the outside, both before and after prison?
- Opportunities to help on the outside are far more numerous than on the inside of prison as freedoms are few and physical needs are supplied. Spiritual needs are the main emphasis inside.
- Outside involvement is perhaps best accomplished by helping an already established group whose mission is to help those who have been released from prison, and have many challenges transitioning back to society. In Alabama our diocese is working to support PASCO in Mobile. In Pensacola we are working with REAP. These are concerned groups that can use time, talent, and donations from those who are willing.
- For further ideas see the "Opportunity" page in this Study Guide after week 6.

Kairos Outside runs programs that mirror those done inside, but with friends and relatives of inmates who have participated in Kairos programs inside.

There are numerous web sites that facilitate becoming a pen pal to someone who will greatly appreciate receiving a letter from someone who cares enough to take the time to write. It is not uncommon for an inmate to be incarcerated for years without a visit, a letter, or any money placed on the prison account. Many have never known love from any one; they have no idea of what unconditional love entails.

Additionally, letters can be written to our elected officials addressing the needed changes in the institutions, the laws, or the process as seems proper. Ideas can be pursued individually or with a parish petition, or even a diocesan effort to put a referendum on a state ballot.

Inmates when released often need clothes, a drive to the Dept of Motor Vehicles to get a new license, and a myriad of other helps that vary by how long they have been in prison. Help can be given in person like Bryan

Stevenson does, but it is more often done from afar through organizations like REAP.

Members of these organizations or one of us from the Diocesan Prison Ministry Commission will be happy to come and talk to your group.

Appointments can be made through John Olson 251-929-2002 or JohnOlsonW@aol.com.

Space for Note Taking

The Sun Does Shine – Study Guide Week 6

Chapters 20-24 pages 203 - 242

Topics for discussion

- 1) Jesus said to the rich young man (“ruler”-Luke 18:18), “If you want to be perfect, go sell all your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come, follow me.” Matthew 19:16***

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Those in Death Row have had to give up all normal life and possessions. How did it change Ray? Not all want to be changed. Give examples in Death Row, in normal life.
- Often what’s needed is a catalyst. Ray’s mom, Lester and later Bryan provided that catalyst. Ray had time, endless time, but he also needed love to allow him to concentrate on his spiritual nature, making it primary. How could you become part of that catalyst in prison?

- 2) “Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth”” but I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those that hurt you.” Matthew 5:38***

Matthew 22:39 “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

John 15:12” Love others as I have loved you.”

Questions/ Thoughts:

- What are the characteristics of “a child of the evil one”? What does Christ say? What does the rest of the Bible say? How should we respond when interfacing with one?
- Does love include forgiveness, reconciliation, restoration?
- How does love treat conflicts of interest, especially when it may involve taking of a life?

Episcopal Church General Convention 2018
Resolutions Addressing Criminal Justice Issues

Resolution D077 Reduce Death Penalty Sentence.

(Please read the complete D077 resolution on the pages following this Study Guide Week 6.)

What follows is the supporting reasoning that led to this resolution first presented and passed in 1958.

“INASMUCH as the individual life is of infinite worth in the sight of Almighty God; and

- 3) WHEREAS**, the taking of this human life falls within the providence of Almighty God and not within the right of man; therefore be it Resolved, The House of Deputies concurring, that the General Convention goes on record as opposed to capital punishment.”

Questions/ Thoughts:

- What does this mean? Surely not that God alone can take a human life?
- The consequence of sin is death, eventually for all of us sinners. If death is a given, what is meant here? Is it that our goal and God’s plan for us is to defend life?
- Further, in doing so, working with God, we are to be in a loving relationship with God and our neighbor, and are to bare the fruits of that loving relationship. What are the boundaries in protecting the innocent victim of a crime (or the criminal justice system), versus the ongoing hope of salvation for every human life?

- 4) ” WHEREAS**, The conscience of many thoughtful people has been aroused by the condemnation to death of individuals who may be innocent;”

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Ray’s story should be seen in the larger Biblical picture of God’s story of love, forgiveness, redemption, and salvation for his creation, but Ray’s innocence and the misuse of the judicial system is one of the reasons for

“the long-standing principle espoused by the Episcopal Church that the death penalty should be repealed.”

- Can the law allowing the death penalty be rewritten so that only those who are videotaped or otherwise undeniably guilty be so sentenced, i.e. videoed by a security camera in a “Quick Stop” gas station and store? Does undeniable guilt change the discussion decidedly?

5) ” **WHEREAS**, There is a growing body of public opinion which believes that capital punishment is archaic and ineffective to protect society, as shown by the fact that states which have abolished it have the lowest homicide rates; “

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Why has the death penalty been the norm for millennia?
- What are some of the possible consequences of eliminating the death penalty?
- What have we learned from Ray’s book that would lead us to believe that the “Hell” that Ray lived in would be better than death?
- Does life imprisonment without the possibility of parole seem crueller than death?
- If paroled, does the death of an innocent victim of a repeat offender carry any less moral responsibility than the execution of an innocent person?

6) ” **WHEREAS**, Research has demonstrated that the death penalty falls for the most part on obscure, impoverished, friendless or defective individuals and rarely on the well-to-do and educated;”

“What does capital punishment mean? It means a guy without capital gets punished.” Pg. 166

“Once again it came down to money. (\$15,000)” Pg. 104

“I need money”, Alan Black said. “I need \$10,000.” Ray replied, “I don’t have any money...You do know that I’m in here for robbing people?”

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Obviously, the criminal justice system in Alabama, and perhaps most states, is underfunded. How do we work together, perhaps with an existing organization, to change the system?
- In fighting the effects of poverty, will crime become less of an answer for the poor? What are other suggestions?

7) WHEREAS, The Church believes that each individual is sacred, as a child of God, and that to legalize killing of an offender is to deny the basic Christian doctrines of forgiveness of sin and the power of redemption, and that mercy is a Christian duty.”

Train up a child (in whatever way one does), **and when he is old, he will not depart from it. Psalm 22:6**

“No one is beyond redemption,’ Bryan would say, ‘no one is undeserving of their own life or their own potential to change.” Pg. 176

“Bang on the bars”!

Questions/ Thoughts:

- Again, what have we learned from Ray’s book that would lead us to believe that the “Hell” that Ray lived in would be better than death?
- Could it be the hope of love, forgiveness, redemption, and salvation for the incarcerated and others?

“Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners? On hearing this, Jesus said to them, ‘It is not the healthy that need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Mark 2:16,17

“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” Luke 15:7

D077 Reduce Death Penalty Sentence

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church reaffirms the longstanding principle espoused by The Episcopal Church that the Death Penalty in the United States of America should be repealed; and be it further

Resolved, That all persons who have been sentenced to Death in the United States of America have their Death Sentences reduced to a lesser Sentence or, if innocent, granted exoneration; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of this 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church transmit, forward or send this Resolution to the Governors in all States where the Death Penalty is legal and to the President of the United States of America, encouraging them to reduce the Death Sentence to a lesser Sentence for all persons who are on Death Row in each of their jurisdictions and to submit and support legislation to repeal and abolish the Death Penalty; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of this 79th Convention of The Episcopal Church transmit, forward or send this Resolution to all Bishops in States and Federal Jurisdictions where the Death Penalty is legal, encouraging them to appoint task forces of clergy and lay persons within each of their jurisdictions to develop a plan to repeal the Death Penalty, to be witnesses in the name of Jesus Christ, and to request that these Bishops report on their actions to the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church annually prior to the 80th General Convention, on or before June 30, 2019, June 30, 2020, and June 30, 2021, all of which reports shall be available to lay communicants and clergy of The Episcopal Church; and be it further

Resolved, That The 79th General Convention urge Dioceses, congregations, and Episcopalians to advocate for passage of legislation in state legislatures that would abolish the Death Penalty and commend those Governors who have suspended the Death Penalty in their states.

**The underlining in Resolution D077 is that of our Commission and not of the General Convention.*

Opportunities Page

Are you inspired by this to let God lead you to answer Christ's call to use your time, talent, or resources to help those who for whatever reason find themselves in prison, or needing help after being released from prison? We are hoping to help you with the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be an instrument of God's love in the lives of these men and women.

Some examples of involvement include:

Kairos Prison Ministry: Provides opportunities to share God's love both inside and outside of prison including but not limited to small group discussions, creating both spiritual and visual aids, cooking, computer data entry, fund raising, prison chapel involvement.

ReEntry Alliance Pensacola (REAP): "To improve the safety and quality of life in Northwest Florida by enabling individuals returning from incarceration to be self-sufficient, crime free, productive citizens and neighbors. All varieties of opportunities.

The PASCO Home: A Transition Home For Men & Women – Physical And Spiritual Christian Outreach. In West Mobile. All varieties of opportunities helping in person or from afar.

Home of Grace: Drug addiction recovery. Clinical Christian Counseling. Ministering the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to those struggling with addictions.

Arise Citizen's Policy Project: Speaking up for change in Alabama

Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast Cycle of Prayer: For Prisoners, Prisons, Staff, Their Families and the Victims of Crime Everywhere.

- Chapel of St. Dismas, Fountain Prison, Atmore AL – An active Diocesan Chapel within the prison walls, with a weekly Eucharist celebration, Bible Study, Baptism, Confirmation, Bishop's visit.

- Federal Correctional Institution, Marianna FL – Twice a month, teams from St. Luke's Mariana visit inmates who do not have other visitors and celebrate the Eucharist in both the Men's and the Women's chapels.
- Pike County Jail, Troy AL – Every Sunday, members of St. Mark's Troy celebrate the Eucharist with inmates in the County Jail. Once a month, homemade cupcakes are served to inmates and staff to celebrate birthdays. Inmates and staff are also treated to an annual BBQ dinner.

Along with these direct "inside the walls" ministries, our Diocesan Commission on Prison Ministry researches and advocates for a wide range of issues, including:

- sentencing guidelines
- living conditions and treatment of inmates
- education and training

Information on becoming a pen pal.

Volunteers who are hoping to connect you with an opportunity to share God's love

The Rev. Deacon Ed Richards, riched@knology.net, 850-276-0460, St. Thomas-By-The-Sea Episcopal, Panama City Beach, FL

Mr. Al Richey, arichey1@cox.net, 850-243-0057, St. Simon's on the Sound Episcopal, Fort Walton Beach, FL

The Rev. Matt Dollhausen, fathermatt@hotmail.com, 850-623-2905, St Mary's Episcopal, Milton, FL

Mr. John Kendall, ahotdogstand@aol.com, 850-529-0207, Christ Episcopal, Pensacola, FL

The Rev. Deacon Susan McKee, susan@stpaulsms.org, 251-978-1144, St Peters Episcopal, Bon Secour, AL, (covering the Alabama Gulf Coast and up to Magnolia Springs, AL

Mr. Wayne Verry, wverry@gulftel.com, 251-609-0415, St. Paul's Episcopal, Foley, AL (covering central and north Baldwin County)

Mr. John Olson, johnolsonw@aol.com, 251-929-2002, St. James Episcopal, Fairhope, AL (Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay)

Ms. Catie Strickland, catiestrick@gmail.com, 334-372-2880, St. Mark's Episcopal, Troy, AL