

UNFINISHED JOURNEY

STUDY QUESTIONS

Preface and Introduction

1. This whole “Repairing the Breach” process is based on the assumption that if we are serious about moving forward to true racial healing and reconciliation, we will have to deal honestly and openly with our past. Do you agree with this assumption? If not, why not? If so, why do you think so many people resist doing it? What about you? Have you experienced any resistance within yourself to facing this history?
2. How has racism wounded *white* people? Drawing on the insights of Joy Leary, Thomas Berry, Brett Litz (“moral injury”), and *especially* (if you are white) on your *own experience*, discuss this seldom-addressed aspect of racism.
3. There is much talk today about the difference between “retributive” and “restorative” justice. Retributive justice focuses primarily on what law was broken, who is guilty, and what punishment is appropriate. Restorative justice focuses primarily on what harm has been done; how the offended one(s) and the community, together, can address that harm; and who needs to do what to restore the victims and all the broken relationships to wholeness (at least as much as possible). Viewed through this lens, how does framing our discussion of racism in terms of “woundedness” and “principalities and powers” begin to move us in the direction of *restorative* justice, thereby providing a new way of approaching this difficult subject?
4. Russ Parker emphasizes the concept of “representational confession” as an important component in healing wounded history. How do you understand that concept? Does it make sense to you? How so, or why not?
5. In what sense is racism a *systemic/institutional* problem that needs a systemic/institutional response? And in what sense is it a *spiritual* issue that requires a spiritual response?

Chapter 1

1. Is there anything in this chapter that was new or surprising to you—things you had never before been aware of or had thought much about previous to reading this chapter?
2. In our diocesan Level I anti-racism training we focus on the core issues of *power* and *identity*—i.e., how power is used *externally* to promote and protect white privilege and how, *internally*, it gets imbedded in our innermost beings as “internalized racial superiority” (in white people) and “internalized racial oppression” (in people of color). This chapter has focused on the *origins* of these patterns and expressions of racism. How is that legacy still operative here in the *present*?

3. The point is made that the very *institutions* of slavery and segregation were violent, regardless of whether the people on top were benevolent or cruel. Do you agree or not? If not, why not? If you agree, do you see any parallels between “then” and “now”, “them” and “us”?
4. It is not uncommon for white people to talk about how *their* ancestors *also* suffered ill treatment and were *also* labeled as inferior. How is the experience of those immigrants and their descendants both *similar to* and *different from* the experience of African immigrants and their descendants?

Chapter 2

1. If your parish was established prior to 1865, are you aware of its history in regards to slavery, slave ownership by its clergy and/or members, and the use of slave labor in the construction of the church buildings?
2. In today’s world, racism is often identified with “red-necks”, the KKK, Nazis, and other hate groups. In this chapter we are confronted with the major roles taken by well-off, prominent Episcopalians, who played major roles in creating and perpetuating the structures of racism and in participating in some of racism’s most horrible abuses. How does this chapter challenge the ways our culture commonly understands and addresses racism today?
3. Chief Justice Ruffin admitted to personal and ethical qualms about slavery, yet he felt bound to uphold “the law” and failed to challenge the societal norms of his time. How do you (we, our church) do the same thing today?
4. Contrast the positions of Bishop Ives and Mr. William Joy in regard to slavery. What is the difference between “charity” and “justice”? Why is the one so much easier than the other?
5. Do you agree with the assertion that the kindly treatment of slaves actually may have had the effective of *strengthening* (and lengthening) the institution of slavery? Why, or why not? Do you see any parallels today?

Chapter 3

1. What did post-Civil War chaos bring to blacks? to whites? What grade (“A” through “F”) would you give the leaders of Trinity Church in establishing St. Matthias’? Why?
2. After reflecting on the history of establishing separate parishes for African Americans during the 19th and 20th centuries, when, if ever, do you think it is still appropriate to establish separate parishes for specific categories of people (e.g., African Americans, Latinos, homeless people, deaf people, etc.)? Share why you believe as you do.
3. The point is made in this chapter that the Episcopal Church has an on-going issue involving two positive values which are often in conflict: “Some argue that the unity of the Church should always be our chief concern, since *all* political and social upheavals pass into history, while the Church remains. Others disagree, saying the Church should always seek justice, no matter what the consequences, and trust God to preserve the Church.” What are your thoughts on this matter?
4. Review the four main “flaws” cited by Dr. Harold Lewis in his assessment the work of the Episcopal Church’s Freedman’s Commission. Do you see any parallels in the Church today?

5. What elements do the establishment of our diocese's various African American congregations have in common? Is there anything about any of them that you would like to comment on or discuss?

Chapter 4

1. Were you aware of the Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 before reading this book? Why do you suppose it was called a "race riot" when it was actually a white-led coup d'état and massacre?
2. Why, after years of so much apparent progress in the area of black education and uplift, do you think there followed such a powerful backlash, one which resulted in a systemic re-assertion of black inferiority and which inaugurated the almost century-long era of legal segregation and blatant racial violence? Again, do you see any parallels today?
3. The whole issue surrounding the establishment of "colored convocations" and "suffragan bishops" had to do with the intertwining issues of *superiority/inferiority* & *power and control*, major elements in the perpetuation of racism. In what ways, if any, do you see those dynamics still operative in our church today?
4. How did Bishop Delany deal with the prejudice which his fellow Episcopalians directed toward him? Why do you think he and other African Americans continued to stay in the Episcopal Church in the face of such ill treatment?

Chapter 5

1. Were you surprised to learn that the great "educational governor" Charles B. Aycock was swept into office as part of the white backlash to Reconstruction *and* that many of his educational views were based on "a mixture of social Darwinism and eugenics that emphasized the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic racial groups"? (D.G. Martin) How may we still be experiencing the effects of those assumptions in our schools today?
2. In the account of the development of the Tryon Industrial /Good Shepherd Mission School, three main characters are mentioned—Mr. Edmund Embury, Mr. Scotland Harris and Bishop Junius Horner. How would you characterize each of them? What lessons can we learn from them?
3. Is there anything else in the stories of these historically African American congregations that struck you as being important to note? What? And why?
4. This chapter ends with the assertion that during this pre-Civil Rights era "old patterns of paternalism and second-class treatment of our black population continued". Have we moved beyond that? What evidence—either way—would you cite?

Chapter 6

1. Either from personal memory or from the accounts of desegregation set forth in this chapter, how would you characterize the role of the Diocese of WNC in the Civil Rights Movement? Were there any "heroes/heroines" in this chapter of our history? If so, who (and why you think so)? If not, why do you not think so?

2. How and when did your parish first open its doors to people of other ethnicities? Was there much resistance from any of your members, or did it go smoothly? Are you integrated now? If yes, how is it going? If no, what reasons would you cite?
3. In what ways did African Americans benefit from the Civil Rights Movement? In what ways did they experience loss as a result of it? Is there anything which might have minimized those losses at the time? And what might we as a Church do today to help heal the wounds of the past and move to a more just and inclusive future?
4. Is there still a need for our separate black parishes? If so, why? If not, how should we address the issue?
5. Why do you think the number of black Episcopalians continues to decline (at least in most of the South and outside of our nation's large urban centers)? Is there anything we can—or should—do about that? If so, what and how...and who needs to be in on the conversation?

Afterword

1. To what extent do you think we are in another racial “backlash” period? How should we be addressing it?
2. One way to counter paternalism and its damaging effects (according to this author) is “to make sure those who will be *affected* by any decision are involved in the *making* of it,” that is, by being sure they are at the decision-making table from the very beginning. Can you think examples in your own experience where this has *not* happened (and what happened as a result)? Can you think of anything else which might be done to counter paternalism?
3. What lessons drawn from this study can help us address the discrimination and injustices being experienced by other groups?
4. The author concludes this book with some personal reflections on how his own life has been enriched by sharing life and ministry with African Americans and on his belief that God has created us in such a way that we can find true healing and wholeness only insofar as we are reconciled with one another. To what extent do you share his experience and/or this viewpoint of his?
5. What are *your* closing reflections as we finish up the study of this book?