

Dec 24th 1839

AWAKENING TO JUSTICE

FAITHFUL VOICES FROM
THE ABOLITIONIST PAST

DISCUSSION & REFLECTION GUIDE
The Dialogue on Race & Faith Project

These rooms are in the rear of the ship but 5 in. high	Women's Room	Mens Room	Boys Room
	20 by 20	37 by 18	15 by 12
	No 107	No 216	93
			No 238
	This includes the 16 landed		

As I contemplate the awful suffering that the poor creatures must have endured during a passage of 50 days from the coast of Africa my soul is in distress & I feel to exclaim How long O Lord How long shall these poor creatures be torn from the coast their homes & to endure so much for the arrival of me O who can measure the guilt as sounds the wails of this nefarious traffic & its victims

Awakening to Justice: Faithful Voices from the Abolitionist Past

Readers' Discussion & Reflection Guide

Written by Heather McDaniel

Awakening to Justice tells the story of 19th century men and women who resisted racial injustice and sought to live out the full gospel message God had called them to. But the book does more than that: it is the product of an intentional community of diverse 21st century women and men, the Dialogue on Race and Faith team, who connected their own stories and passions with those of the revivalist abolitionists they studied and explored together. The authors of *Awakening to Justice* hope that their dialogue will continue in churches, schools, and community groups, as you come to know these abolitionists for yourself and apply their words and witness to your particular context, community, and calling.

This discussion guide contains questions, prompts, and prayers that will help individuals, small groups, or classes process the information in each chapter, connect more deeply to the featured figures, make connections within their own context, and discern how the prophetic witness of the past can help them live more faithfully in the present. We recommend that you look over each chapter's questions before reading the chapter, since this will help you engage and connect as you read.

Tips for Using this Discussion & Reflection Guide:

As an individual reader: The questions in each chapter's guides can help you reflect and extend the content to your own context. However, you will get the most out of this book if you engage others in the questions that grip you and linger with you, particularly if your conversation partners come from a different background or context than your own.

For those in a small group, reading group, campus ministry group, or Christian education class setting: The revivalist abolitionists profiled in *Awakening to Justice* engaged in activism that arose from their worship and theology. In the same spirit, each chapter's discussion encourages your group to open with prayer and perhaps by singing a hymn. The songs that have been chosen are either: (a.) expressive of the experience of the enslaved/oppressed (i.e., African American spirituals); (b.) emerging out the 2nd Great Awakening; and/or (c.) mentioned in the primary sources for this book. If you prefer not to sing the suggested hymn or spiritual, you may instead use its words as your opening prayer. Each chapter also concludes with a closing prayer drawn from a direct quote that comes from one of the book's featured figures, which you may choose to say together.

These readings will be most fruitful if your group is intentionally diverse, with conversation partners coming from a range of backgrounds. If your group is not already diverse, consider inviting people from a congregation in your community that has a different racial composition than yours.

As a pastor or church staff person: You may consider doing a sermon series or Christian education focus based on some of the book’s chapters. Sermon ideas, suggested worship songs, a film documentary about the project, and a musical chorale for church choirs, are all found on the website: www.awakeningtojustice.com

For those in a college or seminary classroom setting: The discussion guide includes questions that focus on reviewing and synthesizing each chapter’s information (typically Question #1 or #2 for each chapter), which could be assigned as individual homework; and other questions that invite dialogue and application, which are most fruitful if students are engaged in face-to-face discussion in small groups (3-5 students). It might be helpful for the instructor to assign students to small groups after the first day of class. It is best if each group represents a diversity in identities, backgrounds, and viewpoints. It is important to establish and then review ground rules for discussion (explained below) at the beginning of each class.

For all settings:

- **Don’t do it all:** The questions in each chapter’s discussion guide are intended to serve as a menu – that is, it’s much better to choose two or three questions and go into depth on those rather than try to cover them all. Think about the context of members of your own group and choose questions that will invite lively engagement and applicability to your own setting.
- **Listen to the voices from the past.** Our Christian brothers and sisters from the 19th century have much to teach us, which we can learn about by reading their own words. We encourage every group or class to include at least one question per chapter that directly engages with a quote or primary source selection from one of the featured abolitionists, and perhaps to read the quote aloud within the group. You may also wish to have the group or class members read more of the original (primary) sources, which are printed in the Appendices at the back of the book.
- **Establish ground rules:** Discussions about racial justice often involve intense emotions and can quickly derail. In order to preserve an atmosphere of safety, it’s important to agree on guidelines or ground rules ahead of time. While the ground rules can vary depending on the group, here are some suggestions that have worked well in diverse groups discussing contentious issues:¹
 1. **Use “I” statements.** Assertions should not be made as if they are universal truths. Instead, each participant should state that “I believe...”, “I think...”, “I disagree...”.
 2. **Don’t interrupt.** Even when you emphatically disagree or empathize with somebody, wait for them to finish speaking before replying.
 3. **Maintain confidentiality.** Don’t share the stories and opinions of others in your group without asking for and receiving their permission.
 4. **Be present in mind, body, and spirit.** Listen actively to each speaker, focusing on understanding their perspective, even if it differs from your own. Silence your electronic devices and make sure they are face down or put away.

¹ These are the ground rules in classes taught by Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil, the Associate Professor of Reconciliation Studies at Seattle Pacific University. She lists them in all syllabi and reviews them at the beginning of each class so that students can verbally affirm them before engaging in dialogue.

Prologue (Jemar Tisby)

Open with prayer, a chance for small group participants to introduce themselves, and an overview of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): “Lord, I Want to Be a Christian” (African American spiritual)

https://hymnary.org/text/lord_i_want_to_be_a_christian_in_my_heart

Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart, in my heart.

Lord, I want to be a Christian in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart, in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more loving in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart, in my heart.

Lord, I want to be more holy in my heart.

Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart, in my heart.

Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart.

If participants have not already viewed the 30-minute documentary that accompanies the book, you may want to watch it together – it can be streamed at <https://www.awakeningtojustice.com/film>.

1. In his prologue, Dr. Tisby acknowledges that a study of history illumines both a) the complicity and compromise of Christianity when it comes to race, and b) the prophetic witness of Christians who confronted racial injustice and worked for freedom because these values were integral to their faith.
 - Which of these two stories of Christianity’s history with racial justice (a or b) have you heard more often or more fully? Which is more natural for you to listen to and engage with?
 - Why is it important to listen to both narratives (of Christianity as complicit with racism and Christianity as prophetic regarding racism), and what do we lose if we focus on one and neglect the other?
2. On the top of p.3, Dr. Tisby writes: “The longer I engage in the work of racial justice advocacy, the more persuaded I become that many answers to the most pressing problems of the present can be found by studying the past.” He then articulates some of the “pressing questions” that animate his own engagement with history.
 - Think about your own engagement with racial justice advocacy and the issues that animate you right now. What are some of the pressing questions that you bring to your engagement with the story and witness of 19th century Christian abolitionists?
 - How can studying the past assist us in dealing with current issues and problems?

3. The book of Deuteronomy records Moses' final address to a new generation of Israelites as they prepared to enter the land God promised them after 40 years of desert wandering. At the end of his instruction, Moses teaches his listeners the "Song of Moses" (Deut. 32), a poem that recounts Israel's history as a prophetic witness for their future.* Read verse 7 of this poem, where Moses exhorts the Israelites to remember, inquire about, and consider their past. (*See Psalms 105-106 as two more examples of historical poems that function as prophetic witness.)
 - Why was it important for the Israelites to look back in order to go forward?
 - How would their history function as a prophetic witness to them?
 - How can we allow voices from the past (such as the voices of David Ingraham, James Bradley, and Nancy Prince) to become prophetic witnesses to us rather than simply sources of historic information?

4. On pp.4-5, Dr. Tisby describes his participation in the Dialogue on Race and Faith, the diverse Christian community that explored Ingraham's journal in its historical context and produced this book. He writes: "What drew me to participate in the project was the embodied nature of the experience. As scholars from various backgrounds gathered to analyze, discuss, debate, and synthesize these historical events, we found ourselves benefitting from the type of community and cooperation that the historical actors in our study tried to create" (p.5).
 - If you are studying this book in a group or class, take some time for each person to share the particular background they bring to the table. This could include ethnicity and/or other identities, life experience and education, places lived, and family history. How might these diverse backgrounds help your group more fully engage and practically respond to the history you'll be exploring together?

Closing prayer: O God, it is good to rest in you and stand still and see your salvation. O for more active faith in your love and mercy to your children. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name. Amen. (Adapted from David Ingraham's journal entry: January 28, 1840)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- *The 1619 Project* – watch the six-part docuseries on Hulu or view the New York Times interactive website here: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>
- *13th* – watch the full documentary on Netflix
- Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*. New York: Liveright, 2020.
- Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019.

Introduction: Waking a Sleeping Church **(Douglas M. Strong & Christopher P. Momany)**

Open with prayer and a review of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): “Awake! O Church of God, Awake!” (Charles Wesley) <https://hymnary.org/hymn/VoT11913/42>

1. Awake, O Church of God, awake! No longer in thy sins lie down; The garment of salvation take; Thy beauty and thy strength put on. Awake, O Church of God, awake! Be purged from ev’ry sinful stain; Awake, O Church of God, awake! Nor bear His hallowed name in vain.	2. Shake off the dust that blinds thy sight, And hides the promise from thine eyes; Arise, and struggle into light; The Great Delivr’rer calls, “Arise!” Awake, O Church of God, awake! Be purged from ev’ry sinful stain; Awake, O Church of God, awake! Nor bear His hallowed name in vain.
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3. Shake off the bands of sad despair;
Assert thy blood-bought liberty;
Look up, thy broken heart prepare,
and God shall set the captive free.
Awake, O Church of God, awake!
Be purged from ev’ry sinful stain;
Awake, O Church of God, awake!
Nor bear His hallowed name in vain.

1. As Dr. Strong and Dr. Momany studied the newly discovered journal of David Ingraham, they realized that it “could be a means through which twenty-first-century Christians might address the reality of racism in society today” (p.11).

- How did the content of David Ingraham’s journal, discovered in 2015, relate to the events that prompted an “overdue racial reckoning” in the United States around the same time period?
- What was distinctive about Ingraham’s spirituality and practice (compared to most other white people of his time) that makes his journal compelling and relevant for Christians today?

2. On pp.14-17, Dr. Strong and Dr. Momany describe the historical, cultural, social, and religious context of the nineteenth century abolitionists you will study.

- How does their context compare to your current historical, cultural, social, & religious context; how is it similar, and how is it different?
- How might your own context shape how you process and apply the witness and testimony of David Ingraham, Nancy Prince, and James Bradley?

3. In the Introduction (p.13), we read that “the nineteenth-century activists described in this book demonstrated simultaneous commitments to vital piety and racial justice.” If abolitionists from 200 years ago were able to practice a deep, Christ-centered spiritual life while pursuing justice advocacy, why does it seem so difficult to keep such commitments together today? What can you do – both personally and as a church – to maintain both of these commitments, in our polarized religious environment?
4. Howard Thurman was a Black pastor and theologian who wrestled with the reality of systemic injustice and Christian complicity in his 1949 book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. These are his searing questions, quoted on pp.19-20 of *Awakening*: “Why is it that Christianity seems impotent to deal radically, and therefore effectively, with the issues of discrimination and injustice on the basis of race? Is this impotence due to a betrayal of the genius of the religion, or is it due to a basic weakness in the religion itself?”
 - How would you answer the second question, and why did you answer it the way you did?
 - What resources does Christianity have to resist discrimination, injustice & racism?
 - Is resisting racial injustice part of the mandate of being a Christ-follower? Why or why not?

Closing prayer: O gracious God, may I ever bear Christ in all I say or do. O may my last expiring breath, his loving kindness sing in death. Amen. (Adapted from David Ingraham’s journal entry, September 17, 1839)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Boston, MA: Beacon, 1949/1976 reprint.
- Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1957/2004 reprint.
- Keith J. Hardman, *Seasons of Refreshing: Evangelism and Revivalism in America*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2006.
- James Brewer Stewart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1996.
- Douglas M. Strong, *Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious Tensions of American Democracy*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999.

Chapter 1: “How Long, O Lord?” (Christopher P. Momany)

Open with prayer and a review of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child” (African American spiritual):

https://hymnary.org/text/sometimes_i_feel_like_a_motherless_child

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child.
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
a long ways from home,
a long ways from home.

Sometimes I feel like I’m almost gone.
Sometimes I feel like I’m almost gone.
Sometimes I feel like I’m almost gone.
a long ways from home,
a long ways from home.

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1. This chapter introduces readers to the central figures of this book: David Ingraham and his wife Betsey, James Bradley, and Nancy Prince.
 - What stood out to you or surprised you about their stories? Where did you find connections?
 - Of the abolitionists profiled, whose story are you the most curious about or drawn to? Which of them would you most like to meet and talk with? Why? What question would you like to ask them?
 2. The “Lane Debates” (pp.30-33) were student-organized conversations about slavery that gave birth to an antislavery society at Lane Seminary in 1834. The debates and society alarmed the school’s trustees and they reacted harshly, prompting the “Lane Rebels” to leave in protest.
 - Why do you think the trustees of Lane Seminary were so threatened by the student debates and the antislavery society? What did they fear? What was the risk to their institution?
 - Who is currently creating “unrest” similar to what the Lane rebels prompted, and where?
 - Think of an institution (such as a church, school or nonprofit) that you are a part of. If you were to organize a set of debates there that addressed a contemporary justice-focused issue from a Christian perspective, what issue would you choose? Why? Where might you encounter opposition?
 3. David Ingraham was deeply shaken by his encounter with the captured slave brig *Ulysses* in Port Royal, Jamaica. Read Ingraham’s journal account of the *Ulysses* in Appendix B (Dec. 25 1839, pp. 196-198) and his letter published in the newspaper *The Colored American* in Appendix D (pp. 209-212). If you are in a small group, it would be worthwhile to read his letter aloud.
 - How does Ingraham use the tools he has (his words) to make the horror of what he witnessed come alive to his readers? How does he engage their imaginations (which senses does he appeal to)? How does he appeal to the readers’ emotions? Do you think he is successful?
 - How does Ingraham build his readers’ solidarity with enslaved people?

4. In her book *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, Brenda Salter McNeil writes that individuals and communities are most often nudged (or catapulted) onto a journey towards active justice as a result of a “catalytic event” that shakes them up and forces them out of cycles of preservation and isolation.* (For example, the Lane Debates and James Bradley’s testimony in particular were a catalytic event for Lane Seminary.)
 - How do you think Ingraham’s encounter with the *Ulysses* served as a catalytic event for him?
 - How does Ingraham write about the horror of the *Ulysses* so that it might become a catalytic event for his readers? How does he try to move his readers to action? What actions does he suggest?
 - Has there been a catalytic event in your own life that spurred or altered your commitment to racial justice? If you are comfortable, please share about how it impacted you.
 - What are recent catalytic events that have shaken our nation and resulted in change? How about your particular community or institution (e.g. church or school)?
 - What would need to occur for an event to become catalytic for you, your family, friends, and those in your social circle or institution, nudging them onto the road of becoming consistent advocates for racial justice? How could you help move those you have influence with in that direction?

5. David Ingraham died from tuberculosis on the anniversary of emancipation in the British Caribbean, with American emancipation still years in the future. “While the timing of his death symbolized arrival at a destiny, from our earthly perspective so much was left undone,” writes Dr. Momany. “Almost two hundred years later, we still ache at the incompleteness of the task” (p.27).
 - What emotions does this bring up in you? What makes you ache when you look at the world around you? Where do you find hope?
 - How does the struggle for racial equity remain unfinished? What would completion look like?

Closing prayer: Lord, you are my defense, the Holy one of Israel is my Savior. I’ll trust you for strength and defense. What things were gain to me, I count loss for Christ, for whom I have suffered all things; and do count them nothing, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, that which is of God by faith, that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness. Amen.
(Adapted from Nancy Prince)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- *Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness, and Justice*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020.
- Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., *Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimké Weld and Sarah Grimké, 1822-1844*, 2 vols. New York and London: D. Appleton-Century, 1934.
- Lawrence Thomas Lesick, *The Lane Rebels: Evangelicalism and Antislavery in Antebellum America*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1980.
- Christopher P. Momany, *Compelling Lives: Five Methodist Abolitionists and the Ideas That Inspired Them*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2023.
- Christopher P. Momany, *For Each and All: The Moral Witness of Asa Mahan*. Nashville, TN: Wesley’s Foundry Books, 2018.

Chapter 2: “Soul Destroyers Tore Me from My Mother’s Arms” **(Sègbégnon Mathieu Gnonhoussou)**

Open with prayer and a review of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): This is a traditional worship song in Goun, one of the languages used in the nation of Benin. Goun, Tori, and Mina are West African languages, while English and French are colonial European languages.

Lyrics in Goun

All: Mì kpà Mahu eee! Mì kpà Mahu eee
Mì kpà Mahu eee ! Mì kpà Mahu
Mahu ma hwé gbé ɔ́ sé
Mì kpà Mahu

Lead: Mahu nɔ ɔ́ ɔ́ Tɔ́ri gbè

All: Mì kpà Mahu

Lead: Mahu nɔ ɔ́ ɔ́ Mìnà gbé

All: Mì kpà Mahu

Lead: È sɔ́ nɔ ɔ́ ɔ́ Glensì gbè

All: Mì kpà Mahu

Lead: Mahu nɔ ɔ́ ɔ́ Flansé Gbé

All: Mì kpà Mahu

Lead: Mì wá mí ní nɔ kpa Mahu

All: ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́

Lead: Mì wá mí ní nɔ kpa Mahu

All: ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́

Mahu klo, Mahu klo

Mahu wɛ nɔ wá ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́

Na mɛ kpókpó

Mahu klo, Mahu klo

Mahu wɛ nɔ wá ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́ ɔ́

Na mɛ kpòkpò

Lyrics in English

All: Praise God, oh oh! Praise God!
Praise God, oh oh ! Praise God!
God’s no stranger to any language
Praise God!

Lead: God speaks Tori

All: Praise God!

Lead: God speaks Mina

All: Praise God!

Lead: And he also speaks English

All: Praise God!

Lead: God also speaks French

All: Praise God!

Lead: Let’s join and be about praising God!

All: Doer of good!

Lead: Let’s join and be about praising God!

All: Doer of good!

God is big! God is big!

God is the one who does good things!

To all people!

God is big! God is big!

God is the one who does good things

To all people.

1. In chapter 2, Dr. Gnonhoussou presents a historical narrative of the slave trade in West Africa that runs counter to the dominant story that was accepted fact for decades.

- What was the dominant narrative (or “popular storytelling”) about the West African slave trade and the character of West African people, and how was that narrative used to support the institution of slavery or to minimize the effects of enslavement (pp.48-51)?
- How does Dr. Gnonhoussou challenge that narrative? What is the counter historical narrative he offers about how the West African slave trade was directed and controlled?
- What are some of the resistance strategies that West African people employed in order to preserve their freedom and traditional way of life (pp.57-60)?

- What is one example in Scripture where individuals with very little power challenged the dominant, oppressive rulers or institutions of their time? Who were they? How did they do it? What did they risk?
 - How do we discern what is “true” history? Whose voices do we listen to? How can we seek out and hear quieter or more suppressed voices?
 - What popular, mainstream narratives exist right now that skew our perspective on justice or the worth of other human beings? How can we effectively counter these harmful narratives?
2. Dr. Gnonhoussou describes how the oppressive Kingdom of Dahomey was built and upheld by intentionally undermining “the preexisting kin-based bonds, solidarity, and communal life that had defined the kingdoms it conquered” (p.52).
 - In what ways does our society today mirror this dynamic?
 - What remedies and resources does the Christian faith offer for healing this disunity?
 3. The narrative about West Africans as the architects of the slave trade was not the only story used to prop up slavery. Another popular narrative was that the majority of enslaved people were well-treated and content with their enslaved status and the “benefits” it provided. Read James Bradley’s “Brief Account” of his life (Appendix C, pp.189-193).
 - How do you see Bradley addressing and disproving this false narrative?
 - What other false narratives was Bradley addressing in his brief autobiography?
 4. One of the powerful narratives of nineteenth-century Christians who tolerated slavery was that the Bible agreed with them: it never explicitly condemns the institution, and Paul is even quoted as telling slaves to obey their masters with sincerity (Ephesians 6:5 and Colossians 3:22) and sending Onesimus back to his master after he ran away (Philemon). In contrast, New Testament scholar Esau McCaulley speaks for dissenting Christians throughout the centuries who emphasized a different narrative, when he argues that “the Old and New Testaments, even the letters of Paul, provide us with the theological resources to dismantle slavery.”*
 - How do you believe the Bible as a whole speaks to the issue of slavery? Is it appropriate to turn to the Bible to either defend or condemn the institution of slavery? Why or why not?
 - How do we discern between Bible-based narratives about an issue that seem to compete with one another?

Closing prayer: Gracious God: preserve us, and strengthen us in this holy cause, until the walls of prejudice are broken down, the chains burst in pieces, and people of every color meet at the feet of Jesus, speaking kind words, and looking upon each other in love – willing to live together on earth, as we hope to live in Heaven! Amen. (Adapted from James Bradley)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- *Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020. (Quote from p.162.)
- Henri Louis Gates, Jr., “Ending the Slavery Blame-Game,” *New York Times*, April 22, 2010. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/23/opinion/23gates.html>
- Stephen R. Haynes, *Noah’s Curse: The Biblical Justification of American Slavery*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Robin Law, *Ouidab: The Social History of a West African Slaving Port, 1727-1892*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2004.

Chapter 3: “Liberty, Liberty!” (David D. Daniels III)

Open with prayer and a review of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): “I’m Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table” (African American spiritual):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4EeE6ccU40>

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. I’m gonna sit at the welcome table, O Lord,
I’m gonna sit at the welcome table
one of these days, Hallelujah,
I’m gonna sit at the welcome table,
I’m gonna sit at the welcome table,
one of these days, one of these days. | 2. I’m gonna be a registered voter, O Lord,
I’m gonna be a registered voter
one of these days, Hallelujah
I’m gonna be a registered voter, O Lord,
I’m gonna be a registered voter
one of these days. |
| 3. I’m gonna sit at the welcome table, O Lord,
I’m gonna sit at the welcome table one of these days, Hallelujah,
I’m gonna sit at the welcome table,
I’m gonna sit at the welcome table, one of these days. | |
-

1. Where do you feel safe and free to be yourself? What is it about those places or communities that make them safe and expansive for you?
2. Read the description of Nancy Prince’s stay in Russia on pp.65-66, as well as her own words describing her sojourn there on p.215. How did her experience as a Black woman in Russia differ from her experience as a Black woman in Boston? What are some of the factors that caused this difference? What is your reaction to her claim that “there was no prejudice against color” in Russia?
3. James Bradley wrote that “prejudice against color does not exist in Lane Seminary” (read his statement in context on p.191). He was probably speaking primarily about his experience with fellow students. However, we also know that Bradley was one of the “Lane Rebels,” who eventually left the seminary because of the trustees’ entrenched complicity with institutional racism. What do you make of his claim? When an institution is discriminatory, what can individuals who have some measure of privilege (such as the White students at Lane) do so that victims of discrimination (such as Bradley) can exercise agency and self-determination?
4. Based on her experience in Jamaica (pp.67-69), what did Nancy Prince identify as key components for establishing a healthy, anti-racist post-slavery society in America? Do you agree with the factors she identified? What would you add? How well were these components realized in the post-slavery United States?
5. Dr. Daniels writes that the status quo of institutional and ideological racism in the 1830s and 1840s “wasn’t good enough for Prince and Bradley, who had encountered those ‘oases of freedom’ in Russia, Jamaica, and Ohio” (p.70). How did the “oases of freedom” that Nancy Prince and James Bradley encountered shape their beliefs about who they were, as well as their racial ethics and expectations?

6. Think about a particular community you are a part of (for example, your church, denomination, place of employment or institution of learning, or the community you live in).
- Who feels safe and welcome and is able to flourish and have agency here, and who might not feel safe, valued, or empowered because of a particular identity or life experience?
 - Does the culture of this community differ from the wider culture? How? Why?
 - What changes would need to happen in order for this community to be more of an “oasis of freedom” for individuals who experience discrimination or marginalization in daily life?

Closing prayer:

Gracious God: Amid this world’s tumultuous noise,
For peace my soul to Jesus flies;
If I’ve an interest in your grace,
I want no other hiding place.

I’m in a wilderness below,
Lord, guide me all my journey through,
Plainly let me thy footsteps trace,
Which lead to heaven, my hiding place.

Then with enlarged powers,
I’ll triumph in redeeming love,
Eternal ages will I praise
You, Lord, for such a hiding place. Amen. (adapted from Nancy Prince)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- Gary J. Kornblith and Carol Lasser, *Elusive Utopia: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Oberlin, Ohio*. Baton Rouge, LA: LSA Press, 2018.
- Benjamin Quarles, *Black Abolitionists*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1991.
- Dr. David D. Daniels III, “Black Europe, Christian Africa: Excavating the Origins of African American Christianity prior to the Rise of Modern Racism, 1500-1700.” Black History Month lecture at The King’s College, New York, February 10, 2022.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFyEzZd1xCw>

Chapter 4: “Reviving Our Spiritual Strength” (R. Matthew Sigler)

Open with prayer and a review of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): “Thus Far the Lord Has Led Me On” (hymn by Isaac Watts, quoted by David Ingraham in journal)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40P1majf6rA>

https://hymnary.org/text/thus_far_the_lord_has_led_me_on

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|--|---|
| 1. Thus far the Lord has led me on:
Thus far His pow’r prolongs my days;
and ev’ry evening shall make known
some fresh memorial of his grace. | 3. I lay my body down to sleep;
Peace is the pillow for my head;
His ever-watchful eye will keep
its constant guard around my bed. |
| 2. Much of my time has run to waste,
and I, perhaps, am near my home;
but he forgives my follies past
and gives me strength for days to come. | 4. Faith in thy name forbids my fear;
O may thy presence ne’er depart!
And in the morning may I bear
thy loving-kindness on my heart |

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1. Dr. Sigler begins and ends his reflections by describing two competing understandings of the meaning and purpose of the practice of Christian worship: as either an end in itself, or a means to an end.
 - In your own experience of worship, which of these two approaches has been more prominent? Which approach are you most comfortable with? What do you see as the purpose of worship?
 - How did revivalist abolitionists display a “both/and” understanding of these two approaches in their writings and practices?
 2. The Second Great Awakening placed a high emphasis on the importance of revival (which frequently took place via public worship services) and having an “affective experience of God” which involved the heart, emotions, intellect, and spirit (pp.84-86). Charles Finney championed particular practices in revival worship (“new measures”) that would invite an affective experience from participants, with the goal of personal salvation (p. 87).
 - What are your own thoughts about revival and the importance of either personal or public revival experiences? If you been impacted by a personal or public revival event, how did that affect you?
 - The article linked below* is about the 2023 revival at Asbury University, and it probes the question, “How do we know this is a legitimate work of God?” Do you think the revivalist abolitionists of the nineteenth century would agree with the article’s conclusions? Do you agree? Why or why not?
 - Do you believe that we (as human beings) have a part to play in pursuing or inviting corporate or personal revival? If so, how should we pursue it?
 - What is the difference between a worship experience that results in an “affective experience of God” (one that involves the heart and the emotions) and a “gimmicky performance aimed at manipulating the emotions” (p.85)?

3. Dr. Sigler writes that from the perspective of revivalist abolitionists, “worship is anything but an escape from the world. It is profoundly for the good of the world” (p.88).
 - How did revivalist abolitionists’ understanding of salvation connect their worship with their activism? (See p.90-91.)
 - How did revivalist abolitionist postmillennial beliefs about God’s future impact the way they understood their salvation and the goal of God’s redemption? (See pp.87-88 for an explanation of postmillennialism.)
 - How can our worship help “the things of this earth grow strangely *clear*” to us, but without reducing worship to just a call to activism?

4. David Ingraham mentioned at least 13 songs in his journal, and Nancy Prince quoted five in her autobiography. Dr. Sigler writes that “songs remain with us in ways that prose or speech do not. The songs that we use in worship form our thoughts about God” (p.83).
 - What songs linger with you, and why?
 - How have worship songs formed your theology or shaped the way you understand or believe or act (either positively or negatively)?
 - If you were writing a journal entry about the last week of your own life, what song might you quote, and why?

5. The featured figures in this book (Bradley, Ingraham, and Prince) and other revivalist abolitionists demonstrated seamlessness in their worship, devotion, evangelism, and advocacy for racial justice. In the polarized social climate that exists today, how can you model a similar coherence in your own life and the life of your Christian community? What spiritual practices have you incorporated into your life that expand your ability to love others well and advocate for justice?

Closing prayer: O holy God, there is no one else like you! God forbid that I should ever offend you. O bind me to the cross by love. How tenderly and kindly You have led me along. You have tempered the wind to the shorn lamb. Blessed be Your Holy name. O that I may be a blessing to all my dear friends. May I reflect no other image than that of my dear Savior. Amen. (Adapted from David Ingraham’s July 27, 1840 journal entry)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- *Andre Henry, “Will the zeal of Asbury University’s revival connect with God’s justice?” *Religion News*, February 23, 2023. <https://religionnews.com/2023/02/23/will-the-zeal-of-asbury-universitys-revival-connect-with-gods-justice/>
- R. Matthew Sigler, *Methodist Worship: Mediating the Wesleyan Liturgical Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Chapter 5: “This Holy Cause” (Douglas M. Strong)

Open with prayer and a review of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): “O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing” (Charles Wesley)

<https://hymnary.org/hymn/umh/57>

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| 1. O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer’s praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace. | 4. He breaks the power of canceled sin,
he sets the prisoner free;
his blood can make the foulest clean;
his blood availed for me. |
| 2. My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honors of thy name. | 5. He speaks, and listening to his voice,
New life the dead receive;
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
The humble poor believe. |
| 3. Jesus! The name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
‘tis music in the sinner’s ears,
‘tis life, and health, and peace. | 6. In Christ, your head, you then shall know,
Shall feel your sins forgiven;
Anticipate your heaven below,
and own that love is heaven. |

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1. Dr. Strong opens with a story illustrating how our vision and understanding is shaped by the place that we stand, both theologically and geographically. How have you been shaped by either an intentional displacement (choosing to spend time in a setting where you are not in the majority or in a position of power) or a relationship with somebody who has endured discrimination? How has it changed the way you view the world or understand issues?
 2. On pp. 95-97, Dr. Strong outlines four core revivalist beliefs held by all three of the featured figures of this book.
 - How are these four beliefs fleshed out in James Bradley’s brief account of his life (Appendix B, pp.189-193)?
 - What is your experience with these four core revivalist beliefs, based on churches you’ve attended, Christians who have influenced you, or the church you currently attend?
 - If you have attended a church or engaged with a nonprofit that shared all or some of these revivalist beliefs, did they connect the beliefs to social justice activism or anti-racism work?
 3. Nancy Prince, James Bradley, and David Ingraham expanded and extended core revivalist beliefs in a way that spurred them to press for social justice and establish interracial communities. What is the distinct theological conviction that undergirded and motivated each of the following actions of revivalist abolitionists?
 - Interracial teamwork and cross-cultural community (pp.98-101)
 - The “holy cause” of social reform (pp.101-104)
 - Concrete actions that take the side of the oppressed (pp.104-105)
 - Vulnerable relationships of mutual trust with people who are racially different (pp.105-108)

4. In his reflections on slavery and the Bible, New Testament theologian Esau McCaulley wrote that “God created a people who could theologically deconstruct slavery,”² and that there have been more than enough resources available to Christians throughout history to expose slavery as a fundamentally immoral institution.
 - What resources did nineteenth century Christian abolitionists lean on to expand their revivalist spirituality so that they became champions for racial equity and social justice?
 - Are there institutions today that you think Christians still need to deconstruct theologically? If so, what are they? What resources do we need to lean into?
5. Bradley’s, Prince’s, and Ingraham’s theological convictions gave them courage to stand, speak, and act counter to the culture around them, even when their words or actions led to conflict or personal suffering.
 - What are some examples of how their beliefs emboldened them in their words and actions?
 - Do you have core theological convictions that animate and shape your words, actions, and reactions? What are they? How did these convictions become prominent in your life?
 - Can you think of a time that a core theological belief or conviction emboldened you in a specific situation?
 - To what extent and in what ways is a continual, ongoing relationship with God necessary for sustaining Christ-centered justice work in and outside the church?

Closing prayer: O holy and gracious God, may all be encouraged to walk nearer to you and do more for the salvation of the oppressed. O for more and more of the Holy Spirit to enlighten, lead, strengthen, and sanctify us all, that we may be holy and without blemish before Christ in love. O for a heart to praise you, O Lord, who alone has done great things for us. It is your doing, O Lord, and marvelous in our eyes. Amen. (Adapted from David Ingraham: July 14, 1839 journal entry)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- Donald W. Dayton with Douglas M. Strong, *Rediscovering an Evangelical Heritage: A Tradition and Trajectory of Integrating Piety and Justice*, 2nd edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.
- Douglas M. Strong, *They Walked in the Spirit: Personal Faith and Social Action in America*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1998.
- Henry H. Knight III, *Anticipating Heaven Below: Optimism of Grace from Wesley to the Pentecostals*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014.

² Esau McCaulley, *Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020), 142.

Chapter 6: “Purified Through Fire” (Diane Leclerc)

Open with prayer and a review of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): “Lord, how come me here?” (African American spiritual). This video performance is powerful:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyv_uZRxrHA

Lord, how come me here? (x3)
I wish I never was born.

They treat me so mean here, Lord. (x3)
I wish I never was born.

There ain’t no freedom here, Lord. (x3)
I wish I never was born.

They sold my children away, Lord. (x3)
I wish I never was born.

1. In this chapter, Dr. Leclerc explores the feminine role of mothering as reflected in the lives of Nancy Prince, Sarah Ingraham Penfield, and unnamed enslaved women in the West Indies.
 - How did the experience of mothering look different in each of the three stories? How were the mothering practices of each woman (or group of women) affected by their racial and social identity and status?
 - In our current context, how are women’s experiences of mothering impacted by their social, racial, or sexual identities? How does our cultural view or stereotype of mothering differ depending on the race and/or social situation of the mother?
2. Nancy Prince, Sarah Ingraham Penfield, and enslaved women in the West Indies all lived during the Victorian era, which glorified a “romantic ideal” of domestic life for women (p.119).
 - How did Sarah Ingraham Penfield both embody and defy the Victorian gender ideals of the time period in which she lived?
 - How did Nancy Prince’s life both embody and defy Victorian ideals for women? Do you think that gender expectations and mores might have been applied differently to Nancy Price than to Sarah Ingraham? Why or why not?
 - How did Victorian ideals of femininity and motherhood relate to the accepted treatment of enslaved women? What methods of resistance did enslaved women practice?
 - Intersectionality is a framework used to understand the way that individuals’ particular combined identities can result in unique and compounded experiences of discrimination and privilege. How did Nancy Prince, Sarah Ingraham, and enslaved women experience discrimination differently based on their particular overlapping identities?
3. Both Nancy Prince and Sarah Ingraham Penfield embodied a “self-sacrificing spirituality” (p.124) in which they accepted personal suffering as part of the call of following Jesus and pursuing sanctification.
 - How did their suffering shape them? As you review their stories, do you see places where you wish they had been less willing to accept personal suffering (or more intentionally pursue self-care)? Do you think their suffering was redemptive? If so, how?
 - Read Luke 9:23-24; Philippians 3:10-11; Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 4:12-19. In your own opinion, what is the appropriate role of suffering and self-sacrifice in the life of a Christian? When should we choose to accept suffering, and when should we choose to resist it? When should we prioritize self-care?

4. The suffering experienced by enslaved women was not chosen or redemptive. Instead, Dr. Leclerc suggests that “with great theological delicacy, we should affirm that in the bodies of these Black enslaved women we see the body of Jesus on the cross” (p.125).
- Read Isaiah 53:3-5. What theological claims do we make when we choose to see Jesus’ suffering body in the bodies and faces of enslaved women? What claims, according to M. Shawn Copeland, does such a “praxis of solidarity” make on us (p.126)?
 - How can reading womanist theology help us, as Christians, enter into a praxis of solidarity?
 - Have you been shaped or challenged by reading or listening to theology done by women and people of color? If so, how? From whom do you still need to learn?
 - What would it look like for your community to be a safe place for people who have suffered trauma?

Closing prayer: Lord, you are my strong refuge, and in you will I trust. I shall fear no evil, for thou, O Lord, art ever near to shield and protect thy dependent children. Underneath you are the everlasting arms of mercy; misfortune is never mournful for the soul that accepts it, for sorrow connects the soul with the invisible. Amen. (Adapted from Nancy Prince)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- Diane Leclerc and Brent Peterson, *Backside of the Cross: An Atonement Theology for the Abused and Abandoned*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022.
- M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010.
- Thornton Bigelow Penfield and Sarah Ingraham Penfield, *Letters from Jamaica 1858-1866*. Edited by Charles G. Gosselink. Silver Bay, NY: Boat House Books, 2005.
<http://www.penfield.fm/jamaica/jamaica.pdf>
- Amanda Smith, *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord’s Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith the Colored Evangelist*. Chicago: Meyer and Brother, 1893.
<https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/smitham/smith.html>
- James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.

Chapter 7: “Organized Efforts to Educate and Elevate” (Esther Chung-Kim)

Open with prayer and a review of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): “The Hiding Place” by Nancy Prince (could be sung to the tune of “When I Survey”)

1. Amid this world’s tumultuous noise
For peace my soul to Jesus flies;
If I’ve an interest in his grace,
I want no other hiding place.
2. The world with all its charms is vain,
Its wealth and honors I disdain:
All its extensive aims embrace,
Can ne’er afford a hiding place.
3. A guilty, sinful heart is mine,
Jesus, unbounded love is thine!
When I behold thy smiling face,
‘Tis then I see my hiding place.
4. To save, if once my Lord engage,
The world may laugh, and Satan rage:
The powers of hell can ne’er erase
My name from God’s own hiding place.
5. I’m in a wilderness below,
Lord, guide me all my journey through
Plainly let me thy footsteps trace,
Which lead to heav’n, my hiding place
6. Should dangers thick impede my course,
O let my soul sustain no loss;
Help me to run the Christian race,
And enter safe my hiding place.
7. Then with enlarged power, I’ll triumph in redeeming love,
Eternal ages will I praise my Lord for such a hiding place.

-
1. Who is an unsung hero that you look up to? (You could name a historical figure or someone you know or knew.) How have their actions or words impacted you personally and/or made a difference in the world?
 2. In chapter 7, Dr. Chung-Kim highlights some of the lesser-known actors and behind-the-scenes efforts that empowered abolitionist and post-emancipation efforts to establish racial equity.
 - Which story or actor stood out to you from this chapter? Why?
 - Which effort did you find the most creative or innovative?
 - If you could choose, which of the “organized efforts” described by Dr. Chung-Kim would you most want to be involved in? Why?
 3. Tappan and other abolitionists in the 19th century formed “benevolent societies,” such as the American Antislavery Society, to help them coordinate and organize their efforts. In the Prologue (p.3), Dr. Tisby asked: “What would it take to form modern-day benevolent societies dedicated to eradicating racial injustice?”
 4. Lewis Tappan was a faithful businessman who generously used his money to make a difference in the world. Dr. Chung-Kim writes that “his example offers a model for how Christian individuals and communities of various levels of privilege today can have important philanthropic roles in the quest for racial equity” (p.142).
 - Do you think that the way Tappan spent his money and the efforts he supported promoted greater racial and social equity (and not simply the abolition of slavery)? Why or why not?
 - People who possess wealth also wield a great deal of power and privilege when they choose where and how to give away money. What does it look like to leverage privilege and power without abusing it, in a way that disrupts rather than reinforces systemic inequality?

- What guidelines and protections need to be in place so that philanthropy redistributes power and privilege to the marginalized rather than keeping it concentrated in the hands of donors?
 - In a 2003 interview, Nobel prize-winning author Toni Morrison shared the following: “I tell my students, ‘When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else.’”³ If you are a person who has relative privilege in our society, what specific actions can you take to make a difference in the world, especially regarding advocacy for racial justice?
5. Name a social issue or problem that you are concerned about (either personally or as a church or community group or organization). Take some time to identify some of the factors that contribute to causing or perpetuating this issue:
- What individual beliefs and behaviors impact this issue?
 - What are the relational/interpersonal factors that impact this issue (how it is perceived, experienced, and talked about within families, small groups, social media, etc.)?
 - What are community factors that impact this issue? Are there accessible services in your community that address it? What role is played by public services (such as police and service providers)? What services are lacking or limited? Are there community groups or businesses that perpetuate or accentuate the problem?
 - How does the natural and built environment and geography impact the issue? Are there issues of housing or transportation that come into play?
 - How is the issue impacted by local, state, and national policy, laws, elected leaders, and institutions?

Each of your answers to the questions above suggests a possible point of intervention for you or your group as you seek to make a difference and promote justice and flourishing for all. What is one small action you or your group could take to make a difference or a change in any one of the levels you just explored?

Closing prayer: Gracious God, you have given us much to be thankful for. As we celebrate your abundance, may we also keep our lamps trimmed and burning so that when Christ returns as King, he may say, ‘Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry, and you gave me meat, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, naked, and you clothed me, sick and in prison, and you visited me... Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of my disciples, you have done it unto me.’ May we remember that each one of us, no matter where we are in life, can do something for the cause of Christ: even a cup of cold water, given with a desire to benefit a fellow creature, will be acceptable to you, O God. May the power of God, and the spirit of Christ rule and reign in all hearts. Amen. (Adapted from Nancy Prince)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War against Slavery*. Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press: 1997.
- Marcus Rediker, *The Amistad Rebellion: An Atlantic Odyssey of Slavery and Freedom*. New York: Penguin Books, 2013.

³ From “The Truest Eye,” Toni Morrison interview with Pam Houston, *O, The Oprah Magazine* (November 2003), <https://www.oprah.com/omagazine/toni-morrison-talks-love/4>

Chapter 8: “Made Welcome as Equals” (Albert G. Miller)

Open with prayer and a review of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): “Let Us Break Bread Together on Our Knees” (African American spiritual):

[https://hymnary.org/text/let us break bread together on our knees](https://hymnary.org/text/let-us-break-bread-together-on-our-knees)

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=972KrdZrHfs>

Let us break bread together on our knees.

When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us drink wine together on our knees.

When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.

Let us praise God together on our knees.

When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord, have mercy on me.

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1. What were some of the characteristics about Oberlin (both the college and the town) that made it radical in the pre-Civil War era?
 - Which of the Black Oberlinites profiled in this chapter most caught your attention? Why? How did Black residents shape the college and town of Oberlin?
 2. Dr. Miller writes that the early Black residents of Oberlin were driven by a “spirit of self-determination” (p.147).
 - How do you see this spirit exemplified in the lives and achievements of Black Oberlinites?
 - How does this notion of self-determination fit with your understanding of faith?
 - Is there a contradiction between the “spirit of self-determination” of early Black Oberlin residents and the way that they were “made welcome as equals” in majority-white institutions?
 3. Read the quote by John Mercer Langston that opens the chapter (p.144).
 - If Black residents of Oberlin were “made welcome as equals” at First Church in the 1830s and 1840s, how do you explain John and Caroline Langston’s ambivalent relationship with that church and John Langston’s praise of Richard Allen, the founder of the African Methodist Church (p.154)?
 - On pp.158-161, Dr. Miller outlines the emergence of different denominational churches beyond the Congregationalist model, as well as efforts by some Black Oberlinites to develop churches of their own. How do you evaluate Langston’s “made welcome as equals” claim in light of the rise of other White and Black church denominations in Oberlin and elsewhere?
 - Do you think that having a multiracial/multiethnic congregation is the ideal for a church? Why or why not? If so, what is needed beyond the ethic of “equality” in order for all members of a multiracial/multiethnic church to flourish?

4. By the late 1800s, Oberlin (both the college and the town) had regressed in its commitment to racial equality, and by the early 20th century, it was compromising with many of the racist policies of the Jim Crow era in America.
 - When do you think the trajectory of Oberlin began to move away from racial justice? Why?
 - How did achieving emancipation affect Oberlin in the area of racial equity? Why? What are other instances in history in which reaching a milestone in the journey towards freedom and equity led to complacency and/or regression?
 - Who were the voices calling Oberlin back to its founding ideals? Who are the prophetic voices today, for both our nation and the particular community that you are a part of? How can you amplify those voices?

5. Oberlin was not the only institution committed to racial justice that had a difficult time retaining and practicing its original ideals. Wheaton College, founded as the Illinois Institute, was another pre-Civil War racially integrated, abolitionist Christian school that regressed in its commitment to racial justice. In September 2023, the college released a historical report* that examined its history of race relations (particularly with the Black community) and lamented the many ways they fell short of what God called them to.
 - Read the first two introductory pages of the report (linked below). Why did Wheaton College commission it? What steps are they taking as an institution to repent and correct their course? What is your reaction to the steps that they are taking (including the release of this report)?
 - Does it make sense for an institution to repent of historical racism (as the Wheaton College trustees do in their introduction to the report)? Why or why not?
 - Has a report like this ever been done for your own church or school or an institution that you are a part of? If not, do you think such a study would be helpful? Why or why not? Whose voices (from present day or the past) would you want to listen to?

Closing prayer: Almighty God, you speak very loud. May your words of freedom and justice be engraved on the post of every door in this land, and while your judgments are on the earth, may its inhabitants learn and walk in righteousness! Amen. (Adapted from Nancy Prince)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- *Wheaton College, *Historical Review Task Force Report*, September 14, 2023. https://www.wheaton.edu/media/marcomm/Historical-Review-Task-Force-Report_FINAL.pdf
- Albert G. Miller, *Elevating the Race: Theophilus G. Steward, Black Theology, and the Making of an African American Civil Society, 1865-1924*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2003.
- John Mercer Langston, *From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capital* [autobiography]. Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1894. https://books.google.com/books/about/From_the_Virginia_Plantation_to_the_Nati.html?id=Ro8hAAAAAAAJ
- Fanny Jackson-Coppin, *Reminiscences of School Life, and Hints on Teaching* [autobiography]. Philadelphia, PA: A.M.E. Book Concern, 1913. <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/jacksonc/jackson.html>
- Gary J. Kornblith and Carol Lasser, *Elusive Utopia: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Oberlin, Ohio*. Baton Rouge, LA: LSA Press, 2018.

Conclusion: “A Prophetic Past” (Estrelida Y. Alexander)

Open with prayer and a review of the ground rules or guidelines for your group.

Suggested opening hymn/spiritual (which may be sung or prayed together aloud): “Amazing Grace” (hymn by John Newton)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.
’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!
Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come:
’Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
The Lord has promised good to me, his word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.

1. At the beginning of her conclusion, Dr. Alexander identifies parallels between nineteenth century America and our own context. Although many of the similarities are disturbing and discouraging, especially as racial injustice continues to plague our nation, Dr. Alexander writes that “the parallels can also be catalysts for hope” (p.167).
 - What are some of the hopeful parallels you have identified as you’ve spent time reflecting on the stories in *Awakening to Justice*? What encouragement and energy will you take away?
 - In the prologue of this book (p. 3), Dr Tisby writes that “the most visible racial divide [in the U.S.] cuts through the relations between Black and White Americans, but analyzing that rift informs the efforts of people of all races and ethnicities.” How can we apply the lessons learned from revivalist abolitionists about working for justice for African Americans to the struggles of other people of color (such as Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latino/Latina people, and others)?
2. As she reflects on the prophetic witness of revivalist abolitionists and the ways that this witness can guide us in our own context, Dr. Alexander identifies four themes (identified by section titles on pp.168-180). Which of these four themes resonates most with you right now? Why?
3. The story of Bigelow and Sarah Ingraham Penfield’s struggle at Oberlin Station in Jamaica (told on pp.172-175) is both heartbreaking and prophetic for us today.
 - Think about the principles and ideals that you value as an individual, church, school, or organization. Which of those are most likely to be compromised, and why? What are some of the rationalizations employed when those principles or ideals are compromised?
 - When have you been called back to faithfulness to a value or ideal that is important to you? Who called you back, and how did they do it? How did you feel and react?
 - Can you identify ways your own perceptions or behaviors have been affected by the “smog of racial biases and stereotypes” that surrounds us (p.174)? How did you become aware?
 - What does your own table (i.e. the people you regularly eat and share life with) look like? Who is usually invited to share space at your table? Who is regularly missing? Is there anyone you feel called to invite or include at your table?

4. One of the repeated themes of this book is the importance and power of proximity, both in terms of relationship and geography. Dr. Alexander writes that “true reconciliation is only possible when we share our lives along racial lines,” and that “it is here that churches, whether or not they are multiracial, can create fellowship that models a new reality in our world” (p.179).
 - How can you, your church, or your community group foster relationships of proximity and mutuality that reach across lines of difference (racial, social, etc.)? How can you put yourself in a place of learning from and receiving from those you don’t usually spend time with?
 - The Dialogue on Race and Faith community traveled together to the places important to the people they read about, from Oberlin in Ohio to Benin in West Africa. What are the places (perhaps within driving distance of where you live) that have historic or cultural significance in the fight for racial equality or serve as memorials to events of racial oppression and inequality? Consider taking a pilgrimage to at least one of those sites as a group and commit to listening and learning about the racial history of your own community.
 - What efforts towards racial justice are already happening in your community? How can you learn about, support, and participate in them?
5. If you have been discussing this book in the context of a small group or class, how have you have been encouraged or formed or changed by the witness of someone in your group, or by your interaction with the group as a whole?
6. On page 42, Dr. Momany writes (concerning this book, *Awakening to Justice*, and the Dialogue on Race and Faith project), that “an exploration of this kind would fail miserably were it to lead to no action at all.” As a follow up to this study that you’ve been engaged in, what specific action will you and/or your group commit to regarding racial justice advocacy?

Closing prayer: God of compassion, when we think of what we have learned and seen of the brokenness and injustice in your world, may we feel; and when we feel, may we act; and when we act, may your blessing attend our efforts. And may the time soon come when prejudice of every kind, and all its attendant evils, shall curse our world no more. May we remain committed to you and to each other in labor for the oppressed. Amen. (Adapted from David Ingraham’s letter about the *Ulysses*)

Resources for Going Deeper:

- Estrelida Alexander, *The Spirit of the Lord: Renewal Spirituality, Biblical Justice and the Prophetic Witness of the Church*. Lanham, MD: Seymour Press, 2022.
- Estrelida Alexander, *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011.
- Dana L. Robert, *Faithful Friendships: Embracing Diversity in Christian Community*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019.
- Jemar Tisby, *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Racial Justice*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021.
- Beverly Daniel Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*. New York: Basic, 2017.

This Readers' Discussion and Reflection Guide is a companion to
Awakening to Justice: Faithful Voices from the Abolitionist Past
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Additional resources, primary source materials, and an accompanying
documentary film, *Awakening to Justice*, are available on the website:

www.awakeningtojustice.com