

Allies for Racial Justice Forward (Tremendous thanks to Aaron House for intellectual generosity in sharing his work.)

Forward

1. Do you believe as Dr. King did that we are all, “caught in an inescapable network of mutuality”?
2. Should our theology be combined with social change?
3. To end the chain of hate, Dr. King believed that someone, “must have sense enough . . . to cut off the chain of hate.”
4. Dr. King believed that “Only through bringing together head and heart -- intelligence and goodness -- shall human beings rise to fulfillment of their true nature.” Does this idea sound familiar?
5. Dr. King states, “In these turbulent days of uncertainty the evils of war and of economic and racial injustice threaten the very survival of the human race. Indeed, we live in a day of grave crisis.” Was King exaggerating? Is what he said true today?

Chapter 1 - A Tough Mind and a Tender Heart

1. Which do you think is more effective in today's society, a serpent or a dove?
2. Which concepts did you struggle with in this sermons?
3. Do you think social media has made people more soft-hearted? Why or why not?
4. Dr. King notes that Jesus said he was sending his disciples as sheep among wolves. What formula does King say that Jesus provided for them?
5. How does Dr. King characterize a tough mind?

6. Dr. King states that, "Rarely do we find men who willingly engage in hard, solid thinking. There is an almost universal quest for easy answers and half-baked solutions. Nothing pains people more than having to think." What do you think of Dr. King's assertion?
7. What do you believe the role of the church is in helping people become both tough-minded and tender-hearted?
8. Do you think Dr. King believes there to be a conflict between science and religion? Why or why not?
9. Do you agree with Dr. King that when we passively "accept an unjust system," that we thereby "cooperate with that system, and . . . become a participant in its evil?"
10. Dr. King writes that violence never brings permanent peace. What do you think?
11. Why does King believe there are times we need to know that the Lord is a God of justice, and that there are times we need to know that God possesses love and mercy?
12. Which of Dr. King's thoughts and ideas influenced you to consider something from a different perspective?

Chapter 2 - Transformed Nonconformist

1. What makes it easy to conform in our society?
2. Is Dr. King correct that "do not conform" is difficult advice?
3. Dr. King writes about young people being involved in things they don't "condone or even enjoy" just because "they are ashamed to say no when the gang says yes". Where do you see this in our society today? Is this limited to young people?
4. Dr. King refers to his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, as the world's most dedicated nonconformist. Why?

5. When and why do we fear taking a position which stands out sharply and clearly from the prevailing opinion?
6. Is Dr. King correct that few of us have the audacity to express publicly our convictions?
7. Dr. King states that the Church has often “served to crystalize, conserve, and even bless the patterns of majority opinion.” If this is true, why is it so?
8. Dr. King states that “If the church of Jesus Christ is to regain once more its power, message, and authentic ring, it must conform to the demands of the gospel.” What does Dr. King believe was lacking in the church, and what are the demands of the gospel?
9. What does Dr. King mean that “Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously of the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit?”
10. Dr. King laments that human beings “do reverence before the false gods of nationalism and materialism.” What does he mean?

Chapter 3 - On Being a Good Neighbor

1. What is altruism?
2. In your own words, describe the parable of the Good Samaritan.
3. What question did the priest and the Levite ask, and what question does Dr. King say that the Good Samaritan asked?
4. Is Dr. King correct that the ultimate measure of a human being is “not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy?”

5. Dr. King asserts that "One of the great tragedies of man's long trek along the highway of history has been the limiting of neighborly concern to tribe, race, class, or nation." Why?
6. Dr. King asserts that the God of the early Old Testament was "tribal." What did he mean?
7. Dr. King spoke of segregation and discrimination as being the evil monster of his day. What are some current manifestations of segregation and discrimination?
8. Dr. King states "the ultimate solution to the race problem lies in the willingness of men to obey the unenforceable...something must touch the hearts and souls of men so that they will come together spiritually because it is natural and right." In communities and churches like ours that are largely segregated, what do you think works to touch the hearts and minds of people so they see the value of investing in relationships that lead to coming together spiritually?
9. Dr. King spoke/wrote about "excessive altruism." He made the distinction between missionary efforts based on pity versus true compassion. He states that unless the dollars are distributed by "compassionate fingers" they will "enrich neither the giver nor the receiver". What makes it ?

Chapter 4 - Love in Action

1. How do we show the ultimate love in human terms?
3. Dr. King refers to the part of Jesus' prayer on the cross "for they know not what they do" as Jesus' "awareness of man's intellectual and spiritual blindness". Dr. King goes on to state "history reverberates with testimonies of this shameful tragedy." Dr. King references slavery and segregation as two of those shameful tragedies in history. How does man's spiritual and intellectual blindness in the past impact us today?

4. To what is Dr. King referring in his statement, "This strange dichotomy, this agonizing gulf between the ought and the is, represents the tragic theme of man's earthly pilgrimage."
5. How do we fulfill Dr. King's mandate that ". . . we have a mandate both to conquer sin and also to conquer ignorance."
6. Dr. King writes of Jesus' marvelous "ability to match words with actions." He then asks "how often are our lives characterized by a high blood pressure of creeds and an anemia of deeds?" How would you answer that question if asked about your church?
7. When you "see" or realize the impacts of past racial atrocities, what actions can you take to try to reverse them?
8. Dr. King talks about Jesus' passionate teaching of forgiveness to show love in action and Jesus' use of hyperbole to answer Peter's question about whether 7 times was enough times to forgive someone (Jesus answers, 7 x70). Dr. King sees Jesus' meaning when he states "A man cannot forgive up to four hundred and ninety times without forgiveness becoming a part of the habit structure of his being". How we can make forgiveness and love towards one another a bigger part of who we are?

Chapter 5 - Loving Your Enemies

1. Who is our present-day enemy?
2. How do you do with loving your enemies?
3. Dr. King writes, "Upheaval and upheaval has reminded us that modern man is traveling along a road called hate, in a journey that will bring us to destruction and damnation". In what ways is this still true?
4. Why is loving our enemies absolutely necessary for our survival?
5. How does Dr. King say practically approach loving our enemies?
6. Why does Dr. King say we should love our enemies,

7. Dr. King states that the only force capable of transforming an enemy is love. He goes on that to get rid of an enemy we have to rid the enemy of enmity. What is the faith-communities role in doing this?

8. Dr. King urges us to realize that the evil our “enemy neighbor” does is not the totality of that person. How do we as Christians activate this thought?

9. In your current role, what are some of the ways you can be a part of the transformative power of redemptive love of which Dr. King speaks?

Chapter 6 - A Knock at Midnight

1. Who is the stranger in need of assistance?

3. Dr. King states that in the past midnights of society/humanity we have relied on science to help us, but that science can not help us with problems we face currently? What does he mean? Is it true of today's challenges?

4. Dr. King notes that people are dealing with paralyzing fears, anxiety and depression. He also notes that more people are emotionally disturbed today than at any other time in history. Why is this so?

5. In reflecting on church growth, King asserts that “Almost always the creative, dedicated minority has made the world better.” What does he mean, and is he correct?

6. Do you feel hopeful? Does your church feel hopeful? Does our country feel hopeful? Do the people around you feel hopeful?

7. Dr. King laments that though black people had knocked again and again on the doors of the so-called white churches, that they were often greeted by cold indifference or blatant hypocrisy and that even the pastors whose desires were often more cautious than courageous. Why?

8. As Dr. King writes about the church's entanglement with political regimes and war, what does he say about its proper role with respect to the state (i.e., nation)?
9. Consider your church community, has the moral order become gray? If so, how?
10. In reflecting on the parable in Luke 11: 5-6, King notes that people often keep knocking on the doors of the church, even after they have been turned away in bitter disappointment. Why?
11. Have you ever experienced a knock at midnight?
12. What does King say, is the most inspiring word that the church may speak?
13. How can/should we change our assumptions or relationships to be more inclusive of those who are different from us?

Chapter 7 - The Man Who Was a Fool

1. What does it mean to be a fool?
2. Why was the rich man in Jesus's parable a fool?
3. Since our last meeting, which event in the news has given you hope for race relations or made you despair about the state of race relations?
4. What does Dr. King say about materialistic philosophy (i.e. that human beings are nothing more than physiological processes) and nontheistic humanism (i.e. that humanity is God or that man is the measure of all things)?
5. How is death the common denominator?
6. Do you live as though your life does not consist in the abundance of your possessions?

7. What does Dr. King mean when he states, "There is always a danger that we will permit the means by which we live to replace the ends for which we live, the internal to become the external"?
8. What does Dr. King mean when he states, "We have learned to fly the air like birds and swim the sea like fish, but we have not learned the simple art of living together as brothers"?
9. Dr. King suggested a way to rid our needs for storage. What was it? How does it apply to the Church?
10. What are some ways that you are righting the course of what Dr. King referred to as guided missiles, but misguided man?
11. How can we make our lives/actions more focused on the means of living?

Chapter 8 - The Death of Evil Upon the Seashore

1. What was your initial impression as you were reading this chapter?
2. How would you answer Dr. King's opening question, "Is anything more obvious than the presence of evil in the universe"?
3. In reflecting on the world at large, your community, your church and your home what would you call out as evil?
4. Dr. King refers to colonialism as being an oppressive evil of the mid and early 20th century. In our time what would be comparable evils?
5. What is meant by the quote, "In giving freedom to the slave, we assure freedom to the free. . . ."?
6. Dr. King writes that "evil cannot permanently organize itself"? Why not?

7. Dr. King asserts that after the Emancipation Proclamation, the U.S. Supreme Court embedded our nation with a new form of slavery disguised by certain niceties of complexity". What were these niceties?
8. Have you witnessed subtle racism -- what we may call "niceties of complexity" in the past year? If so, what did you witness?
9. How are we "reminded anew that God is at work in his universe," and that the "God of the universe struggles with us?"
10. What will you do or are you doing to be a light that pushes back the darkness in race relations/equality?

Chapter 9 Shattered Dreams

1. Dr. King says that one of the most agonizing problems "is that few, if any, of us live to see our fondest hopes fulfilled". Is he right?
2. What are your fondest hopes?
3. Will Dr. King's hopes be filled one day? Why or why not?
4. What does Dr. King say happens to people who live under the weight of shattered dreams and failed hopes?
5. What Does Dr. King say is the answer to the reality that often our fondest hopes never come to fruition?
6. How is that our capacity to deal creatively with shattered dreams is ultimately determined by faith in God?
7. Is it surprising to you that we do not have more race riots?

Chapter 10 Our God is Able

1. What does Dr. King say Christianity confirms?

2. What does Dr. King mean by saying that in Christianity, 'the law of love as imperative is the norm of all man's actions'?
3. When we say that we have inalienable rights, what do we mean and to whom are we referring?
4. Why has the church often lagged in its concern for social justice?
5. What does Dr. King think of any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and yet is not concerned with the economic and social conditions that strangle them?
6. Is church still the most segregated major institution in American society?
7. Dr. King states the "The judgement of God is upon the church". Was he correct?
8. How are racism and capitalism related?
9. Dr. King is highly critical of many Christians, claiming that we often call Jesus our Christ (i.e. King), but "his Lordship is neither affirmed nor acknowledged by our substanceless lives". Is Dr. King right to be critical?
10. With regards to moving race work forward, how do we as Christians show our commitment to Christ?
11. Why did T.R. Glover write that the early Christians "out-thought, out-lived and out-died everyone else"?

Chapter 11 Antidotes to Fear

1. What is that we most fear?
2. What does Dr. King say God is able to do?
3. How are we paying the cost of segregation today?

4. Is Dr. King correct that "There is so much frustration in the world because we have relied on gods rather"God ""?
5. Dr. King stated that a prevalent fear in his day was the fear of death and racial annihilation. Are these still prevalent fears? If so, how are they manifested?
6. What does Dr. King mean by his statement, -"But our fanatical quest to maintain ' a balance of terror" only increases our fear and leaves nations on tiptoes lest some diplomatic faux pas ignite a frightful holocaust.'
7. Dr. King writes of a night after a particularly strenuous day when he received a call. The caller was angry and said, "Listen, nigger, we've taken all we want from you. Before the next week you'll be sorry you ever came to Montgomery." How does Dr. King say this call made him feel?
8. What did King pray after this call?
9. What happened three nights after Dr. King's prayer? And what ultimately happened to Dr. King?
10. Dr. King states, "Courage faces fear and there masters it; cowardice represses fear and is thereby mastered by it." Are there times when in an effort to reach the church does not take courageous steps but rather surrenders to the fears of its members?
11. Is the statement true by Dr. King that "The Negro must convince the white man that he seeks justice for both himself and the white man"?
12. What fears do we need to overcome to address effectively the issues of race in our society or personal sphere of influence?

Chapter 12 The Answer to a Perplexing Question

1. What is the perplexing question?

2. In what ways does this quote relate to the current state of race relations, "Man's hanker after the demonic is always disturbed by his longing for the divine."
3. What are your thoughts on Dr. King's statement-"To be of its New Testament origin, the church must seek to transform both individual lives and the social situation that brings to many people anguish of spirit and cruel bondage."
4. Dr. King states, "By ignoring the need for social reform, religion is divorced from the mainstream of human life." In what ways is this statement still true or false?
5. How does Dr. King say that we master our fears?
6. Is hate truly rooted in fear?
7. Is love the only cure for hate?
8. What does Dr. King list as some of the fears behind racial segregation? Is he correct?
9. Dr. King states, "If our white brothers are to master fear, they must depend not only on their commitment to Christian love but also on the Christlike love that the Negro generates from them." Is he right? How often do we see groups on each side of an issue demonstrate a commitment to Christian love and to act in a Christlike way?
10. Dr. King states that "the Negro forgives and is willing to forget the past". Has this occurred, and should it occur.
11. What limits you individually from having the power to cast out the evil demon of racism in your sphere of influence?

Chapter 13 Paul's Letter to American Christian

1. Dr. King states "If an earthly institution or custom conflicts with God's will, it is your Christian duty to oppose it." What current issues might today's Christians have to oppose?

4. What does Dr. King mean by the statement, "Through your scientific genius you have made of the world a neighborhood, but you have failed to employ your moral and spiritual genius to make it a brotherhood"?
5. Why are we so inept at removing the evil of racism from our society/lives?
6. What does Dr. King mean by the statement, "It would be both cowardly and immoral for you patiently to accept injustice?"
7. What does Dr. King mean by the statement, "Without love, benevolence becomes egotism and martyrdom becomes spiritual pride."
8. What does Dr. King say about the idea that humanity simply needs to wait submissively upon the Lord who, will in his own good time, redeem the world?
9. Are we guilty of, in the United States of practicing "escape theology" (i.e. the idea that we need to be rescued by God from this depraved and sinful world)?
10. Dr. King states, "When the church is true to its nature, it knows neither division nor disunity." How does this speak to our congregations being of predominantly one race?
11. Can one preach the Gospel in the United States without addressing race?
12. Dr. King states that "One cannot remove an evil habit by mere resolution nor by simply calling on God to do the job but only as he surrenders himself and becomes an instrument of God." What does he mean"

Chapter 14 Pilgrimage to Nonviolence

1. Why does getting to nonviolence take a pilgrimage?

3. Dr. King states, "The more I observed the tragedies of history and man's shameful inclination to choose the low road, the more I came to see the depths and strength of sin." In what ways is this statement true of any current issues?
4. What does Dr. King mean by the statement, "In him there is feeling and will, responsive to the deepest yearnings of the human heart: *this* God both evokes and answers prayer?"
5. Dr. King states, "... our tragic inclination for sin encourages us to rationalize our actions." In what ways does this apply to your circumstances?
6. Dr. King writes that "The end of life is not to be happy not to achieve pleasure and avoid pain but to do the will of God, come what may"? Explain what Dr. King means.
7. What steps do we take to not rationalize our behaviors that are inconsistent with the teachings of Christ?

Chapter 15 The Drum Major Instinct

1. What is greatness?
2. What does Dr. King like and dislike about liberalism?
3. What does Dr. King mean by "You are put in the position of supporting your oppressor, because through prejudice and blindness you fail to see that the same forces that oppress Negroes in American society oppress white people"?
4. Dr. King states that the Church must never identify the "Kingdom of God" with a particular social and economic system. When has it done so?
5. Give examples of violent or nonviolent resistance that has happened recently?

6. How do you define greatness? What are some examples of greatness from your life?
7. Do you think as Dr. King thought that “the universe is under the control of a loving purpose”?
8. Where do you see racial injustice today? Have you witnessed racism in our churches, neighborhoods, cities, states, and country?
9. Can you remember a time when you spoke up for someone who did not have a voice?
10. How can we make “The Drum Major Instinct” a force for good?