

THE GREATER NORTHWEST AREA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

P R E S E N T S



**A WALKING
TOWARDS LOVE**
CURRICULUM

Rethinking Incarceration

by Dominique Gilliard

INTRODUCTION

From its early history, there has been profound tension in the United States—and in its churches—between the idea of incarceration as punishment, and the spirit of rehabilitation. In “Rethinking Incarceration,” Dominique Dubois Gilliard powerfully argues that God’s justice is relational, and inherently restorative. Examining the secular and church history through which we have ultimately arrived at having more people incarcerated than any country in the history of the world, Gilliard illustrates how Christians have been complicit in constructing a justice system that is anything but.

“When we surrender the responsibility of facilitating communal conflict to the state,” writes Gilliard, “history illustrates that Christians become disengaged citizens seduced into believing communities can rid themselves of social ills by simply identifying, weeding out, and quarantining deviant individuals.” Join Gilliard in exploring God’s plan for justice, and our role in partnering with God, as co-laborers with Christ, to bring it about!

As we enter into this deep and personal work together, these group guidelines should be read aloud:

1. When speaking, use “I” statements
2. Listen actively -- be fully present
3. Be aware of group dynamics
4. Reverence all people in and outside of the group as God’s image bearers
5. Step up and step back -- if it is hard for you talk in a group, please make an effort to do so. If it is easy for you, make sure you are leaving space for those who find it more difficult.
6. Allow discomfort to be a teacher



PART ONE: THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

“Biblically,” writes Gilliard, “justice is a divine act of reparation where breached relationships are renewed and victims, offenders, and communities are restored.” A justice system that is overly harsh or punitive in nature and leaves little space for redemption fails to reflect or help bring about the kingdom of God. When that system is further corrupted by financial interests and bias, the “true justice” that God talks about (Zechariah 7:9-10) is thwarted and societal shalom becomes impossible.

Things to think about:

- There are more places in the United States where you can get locked up, than you can get a college education
- Including the people in jails, prisons and detention centers, the United States has more people locked up than any country in the history of the world
- Each day 90,000 people in U.S. prisons are subjected to solitary confinement, a practice which the UN has suggested is more appropriately defined as torture, and one which a UN special reporter, Juan E. Méndez, has said “should be banned by States as a punishment”
- The Prison Policy Initiative found in 2015 that incarcerated people had a median annual income prior to incarceration that was 41% less than the median income for non-incarcerated people of similar ages
- 75% of people in America’s local jails are there not because they present a risk of flight or violence, but because they cannot pay bail
- In 2009, the last year federal data was collected on the issue, the median bond for felony offenses was \$10,000
- A 2014 analysis of New York City jails found that only 14% of people charged with bail could afford to pay their fee at their initial hearing when sentencing occurred.



- 97% of African Americans accused of a crime choose to plea bargain rather than go to trial both because of the costs associated with a trial and the possibility of lengthier prison sentences as a result of trial
- In California, a single year of incarceration for an individual is more expensive than tuition for a year at Harvard University
- We spend \$14 billion annually, or \$40 million a day, holding people in jail cells who haven't been convicted of a crime
- By 2013, 10% of the prisons nationwide were operated privately by for-profit companies
- Private prisons are often able to demand occupancy quotas, sometimes as high as 100%, which can mean that a prison gets paid even when incarcerated people are removed because of security breaches
- Studies show conclusively that education and training in prison reduce recidivism, which is advantageous for incarcerated individuals, the communities from which they come, the communities they will join as returning citizens and for the society at large
- State and private prisons house five sixths of the American prison population, but 73% of state prisons do not offer college-level courses, 56% of private prisons do not offer vocational training and 25% of state prisons do not provide counseling or awareness programs to incarcerated individuals with drug and alcohol addictions

BIBLICAL TOUCH POINTS

Deuteronomy 1:16-17

“And I (Moses) charged your judges at that time, ‘Hear the disputes between your people and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner residing among you. Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of anyone, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you and I will hear it.’”



Hebrews 13:3

“Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.”

PRAYER

God, we know that our human comprehension of justice is limited, that you are the lone just judge. Reveal to us the gaps in our understanding. Help us to see more clearly and relieve us of pride and defensiveness. Open our ears to truth and open our hearts to compassion for all of our brothers and sisters, including those our culture calls “criminals” and “convicts”.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- The U.S. is commonly called “the land of the free,” but we presently represent five percent of the world’s population, and constitute twenty-five percent of its incarcerated populace. Take 5-10 minutes to write down your reflections on this. If you feel led, share your thoughts with the group.
- Given that many private prisons are located in sparsely populated rural areas with struggling economies and diminishing vocational opportunities, can you see how conflicts of interest might arise in a community that is striving to seek justice, but at the same time is economically dependent upon the “success” of a private prison?
- Scripture talks about justice in relation to showing mercy and avoiding oppression (Amos 5:24, Isaiah 1:16-17; 61:8, Leviticus 19: 13-15, Luke 18: 1-8, Micah 6, Proverbs 29: 6-7, Zechariah 7:9-10), rather than protecting personal property. How does our current justice system look to you in light of this emphasis?



PART TWO: THE WAR ON DRUGS

Since its launch in 1971, the War on Drugs has been the primary driver of the unprecedented growth within the U.S. criminal justice system. Another byproduct of the drug war has been the increased militarization of state and local police. The special task forces created to wage this war have been legislatively empowered to perform militia-like invasions—like dramatic entry raids—that needlessly put lives at risk. When we consider cases like Kathryn Johnston’s, we must acknowledge that “we have a responsibility to defend the dignity of society’s most vulnerable,” says Gilliard. However, policies like no-knock warrants, “put both police and citizens at risk. These policies do not enhance our society, make our communities safer, or reflect God’s love and justice.”

Things to think about:

- While crime rates in the second half of the twentieth century were mostly stable in the U.S., Germany and Finland, America’s incarceration rate quadrupled, Germany’s remained the same and Finland’s fell by 60%
- Since 1980, the number of women in prison has been increasing at a rate 50% higher than men, and the number of women in prison in the U.S. has grown by 700%
- More than 70% of incarcerated women are mothers
- The arrest rate for black women for drug-related offenses grew by 828% during the prime years of the drug war—the late 1980s and 1990s—which was three times the growth in arrest rates for white women and two times that of black males
- 1 in 14 children in the U.S. have at least one incarcerated parent
- 1 in 9 black children and 1 in 8 children living in poverty have at least one incarcerated parent
- It is predicted that 70% of children with an incarcerated parent will spend time in the criminal justice system in their lifetime



- Today in the U.S. 1 in 3 black men, and 1 in 6 Hispanic men, will be incarcerated in their lifetime, while white men are incarcerated at a rate of 1 in 17
- Although Black Americans are no more likely than Whites to use illicit drugs, they are 6–10 times more likely to be incarcerated for drug offenses
- As of 2016, 45.5% of state prisoners and 92.3% of federal prisoners were non-violent offenders
- In 2016, twelve states had prison populations that were more than 50% black: Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia
- In Maryland, 72% of the prison population was African American
- In the video, Gilliard refers to “million dollar blocks,” a term which indicates a city block whose residents’ incarceration has cost the state in excess of a million dollars
- In Chicago, over a 5 year period from 2005-2009, there were 851 “million dollar blocks,” and these million dollars blocks were all concentrated on the South and West sides of the city, where African Americans and Hispanics were and are disproportionately represented
- During the same time period, there were also 121 blocks in Chicago with over \$1 million committed to incarcerating residents from a single city block for non-violent drug offenses
- SWAT deployments increased roughly fifteenfold between 1980 and 2000
- While black Americans comprise about 13% of the U.S. population, 42% of SWAT search warrant raids happened in black communities



AMERICA'S WAR ON DRUGS

A TIMELINE

1971

Nixon initiates mandatory sentencing and no-knock warrants

1973

Drug Enforcement Agency created

1984

Reagan grants state and local law enforcement agencies the right to keep cash and assets seized during drug raids and arrests via the Comprehensive Crime Control Act

1986

Anti-Drug Abuse Act creates mandatory minimum sentences for drug offences

1988

Omnibus Anti-Abuse Act passes, initiating disproportionately harsher penalties for Crack than powder Cocaine

1994

Clinton announces the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act containing the 3-strikes policy, which sends those convicted of 3 drug offenses (2 of which may be non-felony offences) to prison for life

1996

Congressional welfare reform authorizes states to bar people with drug convictions from public benefits and welfare

1997

The Pentagon gives 1.2 million pieces of military equipment to local police departments

1998

The CIA admits supporting drug smuggling guerilla armies in Nicaragua and blocking policing efforts



BIBLICAL TOUCH POINTS

Romans 12:1-2

“Therefore I urge you, brothers, on account of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.”

Zechariah 7:9-10

“Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.”

Colossians 1:21

“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.”

Ephesians 1:7

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.”

PRAYER

God, open our minds that we may absorb and process information that is challenging in both its volume and content. Give us compassion and open our eyes to the ways in which others may experience a different America than we do. Help us to listen with empathy. Thank you for awakening us to new possibilities for our nation and ourselves.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Do we believe that a drug conviction places a person outside of God's care? Outside of our care? How does our answer here inform our civic engagement, especially when it comes to policies regarding "tough on crime," "zero-tolerance," and "three strikes and you're out," legislation?
- The War on Drugs was created by politicians who used "tough on crime" and "zero tolerance" rhetoric to get elected. Given that this rhetoric is still being used today, how can we help shift the public conversation about criminal justice from a fear-based conversation, to one informed by notions of grace and redemption?
- According to Mark Bennett, a U.S. district court judge for the Northern District of Iowa, "These mandatory minimums are so incredibly harsh, and they're triggered by such low levels of drugs that they snare at these non-violent, low-level addicts who are involved in drug distribution mostly to obtain drugs to feed their habit. They have a medical problem. It's called addiction, and they're going to be faced with five and 10 and 20-year and sometimes life mandatory minimum sentences. I think that's a travesty." Do you agree? Why or why not?
- Have you observed a difference between how the media has reported on the opioid epidemic and how the crack epidemic in the U.S. was covered?

FURTHER READING

"A Federal Judge Says Mandatory Minimum Sentences Often Don't Fit the Crime"
<https://www.npr.org/2017/06/01/531004316/a-federal-judge-says-mandatory-minimum-sentences-often-dont-fit-the-crime>



PART THREE: THREE PIPELINES

In chapters four and five of his book, Gilliard unpacks what is meant by the oft-heard phrase “school-to-prison pipeline,” and sheds light on two lesser known carceral conduits—our immigration and mental health systems.

SCHOOL

- According to a task force initiated by the U.S. Attorney General, “many children enter the juvenile justice system because schools rely on that system to enforce discipline.”
- Annually, over 1 million youth are caught up in the school-to-prison pipeline, and 95% of those arrests are for non-violent offenses.
- Only 12 states mandate that school-employed police officers (or School Resource Officers) receive student-specific training, and numerous incidents of excessive and inappropriate force toward students have been recorded
- 25% of students who are arrested have disabilities, while students with disabilities constitute only 12% of the student body nationally
- School suspensions grew from 1.7 million in 1974 to 3.1 million in 2000
- Black, Hispanic and Native American students are more likely to be suspended than their peers
- 18% of the preschool population is black, but black preschoolers constitute 48% of the children who receive more than one out of school suspension
- Students who are suspended are more likely to drop out of school, and students who drop out are more likely to be incarcerated
- In California, 70% of incarcerated individuals were in the foster care system as kids



IMMIGRATION

- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) locks up about 400,00 immigrants each year, and spends more than \$1.9 billion annually on custody operations, according to the ACLU
- Arrests for immigration offenses increased by 610% between 1990 and 2000, and the number of Border Patrol officers nearly doubled between 2004 and 2010
- A congressional directive introduced in 2010 mandates that ICE keep an average of 34,000 detainees in custody daily
- CoreCivic and the GEO Group—which collectively manage over half of private prison contracts in the U.S. (including immigration and non-immigration detention)—earned a combined revenue of \$3.3 billion in 2011, and more than \$4 billion in 2017
- The three largest companies (CoreCivic, GEO Group, and Management and Training Corporation) account for more than 96% of private prison beds.
- Gilliard points out in the video that there are 97 passages in the Bible that call the body of Christ to welcome the foreigner

MENTAL HEALTH

- While state hospital populations declined by as much as 75% between 1955 and 1980, the number of people in prison with mental health conditions has steadily grown, reaching nearly 400,000 by 2016
- While there were 680 beds per million people available for those requiring inpatient mental health treatment in 1955, by 2005, there were only 34 beds per million
- Every year 90,000 people are deemed psychologically incompetent to stand trial



- 5% of women in the general population and 31% of women in jail experience serious mental illness
- In 2012, researchers from the Treatment Advocacy Center found that the state of Ohio's ten state prisons and two county jails each held more mentally disabled people than the state's largest remaining state hospital

BIBLICAL TOUCH POINTS

Proverbs 31:8-9

“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

Matthew 25:43

“I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.”

1 Timothy 6:10

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”

Deuteronomy 27:19

“Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow.”

Micah 6:4-8

“For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage. I sent Moses before you, as well as Aaron and Miriam. My people, remember what Balak king of Moab counseled and what Balaam son of Beor answered. Remember your journey from Acacia Grove to Gilgal, so that you may acknowledge the righteousness of the LORD.”



Micah 6:4-8 (continued)

“With what shall I come before the LORD when I bow before the God on high? Should I come to Him with burnt offerings, with year-old calves? Would the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O mankind, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you but to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?”

PRAYER

God, we are grateful for the ways in which you open our eyes to things we have not seen, and people we have been socialized to overlook. Help us to remain connected to our hearts, even as we confront truths that make us want to close down. Give us courage to share our feelings and thoughts in this group, and grant us favor as we go out and share this important information with the people in our lives. Give us all ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to respond.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Which pipeline -- school-to-prison, mental health or immigration -- do you find most challenging to talk about? Take a few minutes to write down your thoughts, and then share if you feel led.
- What was the culture of discipline like at your school(s) growing up? Do you think that your learning experience would have been significantly different if there were multiple police officers throughout your school building? How do you think that your learning environment would have been impacted if you or one of your classmates were at any time forcibly restrained? Arrested?



- In the film, Gilliard talks about how vital remembrance was to Israel's faithfulness to God and neighbor. God's instructs Israel to remember over 50 times—to remember that they were once slaves, foreigners and exiles. To remember that they are called to be distinctive and set apart as people charged with making God's name known and love shown in the world. What does remembrance look like for you? What do you think it should look like for the Church?
- Gilliard points out that rather than, "avoiding, confining, and quarantining the sick, Jesus sought, touched, liberated and reintegrated them into community." How does that compare/contrast with our culture's response to the mentally impaired?

FURTHER READING

"Controversial Quota Drives Immigration Detention Boom"

https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/controversial-quota-drives-immigration-detention-boom/2013/10/13/09bb689e-214c-11e3-ad1a-1a919f2ed890_story.html



PART FOUR: RACE AND JUSTICE

America's unique and troubled racial history informs modern systems and institutions. "Poor people, people of color, and particularly poor people of color have served as cannon fodder for an exploitative system since before the abolition of slavery," writes Gilliard. In this film, he looks at less often examined aspects of post-slavery penal trends, in the South and elsewhere, that impact who and how we imprison to this day.

Things to think about:

- Within 12 years of it becoming legal for black people to read and write in the U.S., 1,400 black people successfully held a political office
- Sharecropping, lynching and black codes emerged in the South as tools for racial control following the Civil War, disempowering communities of color financially, physically and legally in lasting ways
- For every \$100 of wealth held by a white family, a black family holds \$5.04
- Between 1877 and 1952 more than 5,000 black people were lynched, and 1952 was the first year since the emancipation proclamation where there was not a black person lynched in the U.S.
- From 1889 to 1929, a black person was lynched an average of every four days.
- Black codes—or laws that were applied selectively to black people—made it illegal to be out of work in many Southern States, and once arrested for “vagrancy,” incarcerated people were leased out to plantation owners and private companies
- As a result of the thirteenth amendment, between 1865 and 1941, a lucrative system of convict leasing emerged
- Employers fed, clothed and housed leased convicts without oversight, and received replacements if incarcerated people died in



their care, which resulted in working conditions that were often worse than antebellum slavery

- Due to the Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program, created by Congress in 1979, it is currently legal in 37 states for private companies to contract prison labor, and incarcerated individuals earn between 93 cents and \$4 a day for their labor
- In both private and federal prisons today, incarcerated workers are being exploited for their labor in various vocations, including mining, agriculture, manufacturing and service industry work

BIBLICAL TOUCH POINTS

Gilliard talks about Acts 16:16-40, where Paul and Silas free a slave from a spirit that enables her to tell the future. This enrages her masters, who earned money from her fortune-telling. The slave owners drag Paul and Silas to the marketplace, where they state their claim against them and identify them as Jews. Paul and Silas sentenced by a corrupt criminal justice system to be stripped, beaten and unjustly imprisoned.

1 John 2:11

“But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.”

PRAYER

God, give us strength and sensitivity as we confront deeply painful aspects of our shared culture. Empty us of anger, except that which is righteous. Let us be honest in our own revelations, and trust in the honesty of others. Guide us gently into a more holistic understanding of our history and its current implications.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- To what degree were you previously aware of the ways in which institutional racism and systems of racial control continued and in some ways intensified after the emancipation proclamation?
- Observing the overrepresentation of black men and women in prison and the racial bias in the foundation and application of some legislation, does the historical context of slavery, black codes and convict leasing give present-day prison labor a more troubling aspect?
- Given that one of law enforcement's initial jobs in our nation was to return runaway slaves, and that lynching often occurred under the nose of government and law enforcement, as well as the numerous unarmed black people who have been killed and brutalized by law enforcement since, we should not be surprised by the culture of tension and fear that exists between many members of the black community and law enforcement. How do you see that tension and fear playing out around you? In our nation? How might we help diffuse the tension and fear as peacemakers?



PART FIVE: CHURCH HISTORY

In Chapters 6 and 7, Gilliard examines the historical pendulum of religious philosophy as it relates to prisons and prison chaplaincy in the U.S.

Things to think about:

- In the early 19th century, ministers in both the U.S. and England participated ceremonially in public executions, particularly in New England where Puritan preachers guided audiences through the process liturgically
- In 1764 Cesare Beccaria published a treatise titled, *On Crimes and Punishments*, which informed burgeoning movements for penal reform in Europe and the colonies
- While Quakers William Allen and Elizabeth Fry argued for reform and ministered to incarcerated people in England, Quakers also led the way in America, primarily in the person of Thomas Eddy, who was the initial director of the first state prison in the U.S., New York's Newgate Prison
- Eddy and others campaigned to end corporal and capital punishment, arguing that reformation and rehabilitation were the primary purpose of prisons
- As Quaker philosophies were deemed ineffective and fell from favor, a broader form of Protestantism, which emphasized good behavior, was embraced by prison and state officials, leaving a spiritual vacuum that was eventually filled by purification-via-suffering-inclined Calvinist reformers
- Prison chaplaincy was pioneered at Newgate Prison by Baptist minister John Stafford, who believed in redemptive suffering and set the scene for state-sanctioned violence against incarcerated people that permeated institutions like Angola into the 1960s
- Louis Dwight, a believer in redemption and an advocate for the humane management of prisons, provided a more biblical model for prison chaplains



- Most modern prison ministry programs, especially Evangelical ones, are so focused on individual sin that they neither acknowledge contexts of systemic sin nor engage in criminal justice reform and advocacy work

BIBLICAL TOUCH POINTS

Romans 3:23-24

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

Proverbs 14:31

“Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God.”

Romans 10:9-10

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”

PRAYER

God, we oftentimes pray for God’s forgiveness, for both the things we have done and the things we have left undone. Give us clarity as we examine the ways in which the church showed up in early America. Help us to decipher our how you are summoning us to show up today. Shine a light on the biases we hold, and how they inform our beliefs. Soften our hearts towards ourselves and others as we invariably fall short of your glory.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

- In the film, Gilliard reminds us of the prophetic words of Dr. Martin Luther King. “The church,” he said, “must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state.” Do you see the church fulfilling that role now? How could it do so more fully?
- “By ‘justice,’ I understand nothing more than that bond which is necessary to keep the interest of individuals united. . . . All punishments which exceed the necessity of preserving this bond are, in their nature, unjust,” wrote Cesare Beccaria. Do you agree? Why or why not?
- “Decontextualized analyses of sin, our criminal justice system, or society at large is unfaithful,” writes Gilliard, “It leads to flawed conclusions—more important, it is unbiblical!” How is this type of analyses unfaithful for us as reconcilers? Can you think of flawed conclusions it yields?
- Gilliard quotes Dr. Daniel Groody, who writes that, “God’s concern for the poor and oppressed is one of the most central themes of the Bible. In the New Testament one out of every sixteen verses is about the poor. In the Gospels, the number is one out of every ten; in Luke’s Gospel it is one out of every seven, and in James, one out of every five.” Take a moment to imagine what our justice system and our communities might look like if we, as a nation, truly protected the poor. Jot down your thoughts. Share if you feel led.



PART SIX:

THEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

“In restoring the world through Jesus,” writes Gilliard, “we see that God consistently chooses to work from within creation, pointing and moving it toward salvific redemption.” In chapters 9 and 10, he explores divine justice and theories of atonement.

Things to think about:

- Western Christianity favors theories of atonement that revolve around Jesus taking our place and enduring divine wrath, which is known as penal substitution
- Early theologian Augustine laid the foundation for a merit-based understanding of God’s justice, writing that God, “both rewards the good and punishes the bad”
- In answer to then-popular theory that God paid a ransom for us to Satan, which he felt was heretical, Anselm of Canterbury theorized that humanity owed a debt of honor to God that was paid by the radical obedience of Jesus
- Aquinas adapted this theory to his belief that the death of Jesus settled humanity’s debt of sin
- John Calvin, who studied law as well as theology, emphasized that Jesus bore humanity’s punishment, or legal penalty, deeply influencing Protestant and early American thought on sin and crime
- Many years later, C.S. Lewis reaffirmed punishment as central to justice in his essay, “The Humanitarian Theory of Punishment”
- Theories of penal substitution can subtly but surely reduce the significance of Jesus’ teachings, relationships, his calling and sending of the disciples, his faithfulness to the will of God, his commissioning by the Father and Spirit to do ministry, his inauguration of the Kingdom of God here on earth, and his model for us as the second Adam



- Penal substitution overemphasizes God's wrath, makes our reconciliation seem dependent upon God's ability to pour out that wrath, and it gives insignificant weight to God's love for the world, which Scripture tells us actually inspired the incarnation.

BIBLICAL TOUCH POINTS

Galatians 6:1

"Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourself, or you may also be tempted."

Genesis 1:27

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

2 Corinthians 5:17-20

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's trespasses against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

PRAYER

God, thank you for the opportunity to explore foundational thinking of our faith. Help us to avoid legalism and engage it with our hearts. Bring to mind moments of sin and redemption in our own lives, that we may rest in Your extravagant generosity.



CONVERSATION STARTERS

• Gilliard writes that, “The church... exports to the state its social responsibility to be ambassadors of reconciliation, thereby relinquishing its communal legitimacy and title as a people committed to repair, redemption, and transformation in the face of brokenness, harm, and violation.” Take a few moments to reflect on this, and write down your thoughts. Share if you feel led.

• Were you raised to believe that God poured out wrath towards sin, upon Jesus, so that you could be reconciled to God? How did this make you feel? How do you think about Jesus’ death now?

• Gilliard quotes theologian Christopher Marshall writing about the cross as a picture of how God’s justice differs from traditional human paradigms of justice. “The logic of the cross actually confounds the principle of retributive justice,” says Marshall, “for salvation is achieved not by the offender compensating for his sins by suffering, but by the victim, the one offended against, suffering vicariously on behalf of the offended.” (“Divine Justice as Restorative Justice,” Baylor University, 2012,14) Is this the kind of love that God calls us to?

• When you look for the image of God in individuals who have committed crimes, does it change the way you conceive justice?



PART SEVEN: SOLUTIONS GOING FORWARD

“Mass incarceration,” writes Gilliard in the final chapter, “is a byproduct of the church’s failure to sustain a witness that subverts the power of empire.” Encouraging modern-day Christians to engage with the counter-cultural heart of their faith, the author explores four ways in which churches and organizations are countering the destructive effects of mass incarceration: ministering in prison, coming alongside families with incarcerated members, preventing incarceration, and resourcing the formerly incarcerated.

Things to think about:

- Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians, and Revelation were written in prison
- Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, Sampson, Hanani the seer, Joseph, Micaiah, Stephen, Jeremiah, Peter, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Silas, Junia and Andronicus were incarcerated
- God affirmed the protest of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, stepping in to save them from death, because it was rooted in giving honor to Him
- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. also employed methods of peaceful resistance to unjust systems and endured incarceration 29 times for doing so
- In 2015, 130 police chiefs, sheriffs and prosecutors formed a coalition called Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime and Incarceration, whose mission statement represents the belief that, “unnecessary incarceration does not work to reduce crime, wastes taxpayer dollars, damages families, and divides communities”



- North Park Theological Seminary offers college-level classes at Stateville Correctional Center, which are also open to non-incarcerated NPTS students
- According to NPTS program director Michelle Clifton-Soderstrom, education in prison reduces recidivism by 40-50%, but prison college programs have dropped from 350 in 1982 to 12 in 2005
- New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary opened a bible college inside Angola in 1995, transforming the culture in the prison and producing graduates who have helped reduce recidivism
- The Department of Justice has funded restorative justice community courts in 10 jurisdictions
- Restorative justice programs in Texas show reduced recidivism and programs in Indiana report an increase in the percentage of victims of crime who are satisfied by the justice process when it is restorative in nature.
- Old Skool Cafe is a faith-based, youth-run supper club in San Francisco that breaks cycles of crime by training and mentoring formerly incarcerated youth
- Homeboy Industries provides services such as employment, training, mentorship, conflict resolution education and discipleship to more than ten thousand former gang members a year in the LA area
- The Promised Land Church provide church services, job training, court advocacy and drug counseling to adjudicated and formerly incarcerated youth in New York City

BIBLICAL TOUCH POINTS

Numbers 12:1-16

Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses because he married a Black African woman. God punishes the couple, giving Miriam leprosy. Aaron asks Moses for forgiveness, and Moses cries out on his behalf. God says that she can return from her confinement on the outskirts of the city after seven days.



Upon her reintegration, the community is able to move forward together.

Luke 19

Zacchaeus, a Jewish tax collector for the Roman Empire, and a man despised by his community for implementing dishonest and exploitative methods, encounters Jesus. Jesus confounds cultural norms by associating with Zacchaeus and staying at the “dishonorable” man’s home. Upon realizing the depth of his sin and exploitation Zacchaeus is compelled to give half of his possessions to the poor, and he experiences personal redemption through Jesus.

PRAYER

God we know that you ask us to care for the poor, to visit the prisoner, to be allied with the least of these. Reveal to us the ways in which we have failed to do this, and as we repent, help us see the ways in which we can be part of your plan to restore shalom to our families, our communities, our cities and our nation. The challenges that we face are great, but your power is greater. Bolster our faith as we commit to justice in your image.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

• In the film Gilliard talks about systemic reform, including changing the 13th amendment and ending capital punishment. How could you see yourself engaging with advocacy around these reforms?



- Are there ways your community could be more supportive of returning citizens coming into your community after serving time in prison or jail? Of families who have members in prison?
- If confronting mass incarceration demanded your incarceration, where in the bible would you look for the courage to defend your faith?
- What has most surprised or impressed you during this journey?

FURTHER READING

For those interested in engaging more with practical aspects of prison advocacy and reform, you can find more materials for download by visiting walkingtowardslove.com



NOTES:

A Walking Towards Love Curriculum
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