

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide MLK—2019

For MLK Sunday we heard Dr. King's sermon entitled "A Knock at Midnight". In the sermon, Dr. King asserted metaphorically that it's "midnight" in our world, and offered examples of how it's "midnight" in the social order; it's "midnight" in the psychological order; it's "midnight" in the moral order.

Q. What evidence do you see/observe that it is "midnight" in our world?

Q. Of the various things that you see that's wrong with our world, which do you find most personally distressing?

Q. Practically speaking, what do you think/feel that you/we can do about it?

Dr. King also stated that people still come to the Church looking for help, hope, and meaning. He stressed that the Church is in a unique place, role, position to be able to offer the "bread" of faith; the "bread" of hope; the "bread" of love; the "bread" of peace; the "bread" of justice.

Q. How, practically speaking, do we do that?

Q. Historically speaking, how has the church provided help to a hurting world?

In a particularly powerful statement made by Dr. King, he said, "The church must be reminded that it is not the master or the servant of the state, but rather the conscience of the state. It must be the guide and critic of the state, and never its tool. If the church does not recapture its prophetic zeal, it will become an irrelevant social club without moral or spiritual authority."

Q. As you consider the relationships between the church and the state in our context today, what do you think it would look like to take Dr. King's words seriously?

Q. In what ways, both historically and presently, has the church mistakenly sought to be (or became) the master of the state? The servant of the state? How would you describe the current condition/relationship today?

Q. What do you think keeps the church from embracing this role? What do you think would be the cost/consequence to the church if we faithfully fulfilled this role?

Q. What examples can you offer of when the church got this right? Of when the church got this wrong?

Another powerful and clarifying statement by Dr. King was, "The church today is challenged to proclaim God's Son, Jesus Christ, to be the hope of men in all their complex personal and social

problems.” This challenge is not just for “today”; it’s been the church’s challenge from day one, and will continue to be until Christ returns.

Q. If you were to post that quote on your Facebook page (or on Twitter, or whatever means of social media you prefer), what sort of response would you get?

Q. The unbelieving world has every right, upon hearing/reading that statement to respond with “How?” or “Prove it.” If we say, in essence, that “Jesus is the answer.”, how do we practically, concretely, back that up?

Q. Dr. King was one who most definitely believed that the Gospel had something to say about NOW, not just the afterlife. What happens when we focus too much on the afterlife and not enough on the present? What happens when we focus too much on the present and not enough on the afterlife? How do we maintain proper balance?

Dr. King was a great voice and activist for social justice...which is why we commemorate and celebrate him today. Sadly, often times, Christians pit social justice against personal piety/spirituality. These two were never meant to be separated and pitted against one another, but rather to complement one another.

Q. How has your “personal relationship with Jesus” informed, influenced, and stoked your involvement in social justice? How has being involved in social justice stoked your relationships with Jesus?

Q. Where/how does our communal life as the Body of Christ—or the “we”, not just “me”—come into play in all this?