

## **Jesus and the Disinherited**

### **Focus Questions**

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#### **Week 1: Foreword and Preface:**

1. What characteristics did Thurman possess that made him an effective intellectual and spiritual leader for the dispossessed?
2. How might we draw on Thurman's deep connection to community as a tool in our postmodern context?
3. What does Thurman name as the weakness in the Christian tradition?
4. According to Thurman, what are key connections between spirituality and social transformation?

#### **Week 2: Chapter 1, "Jesus—An Interpretation"**

1. What is the primary question with which Thurman is concerned? How does this question inform his interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth?
2. What were the two alternatives faced by the Jewish community of which Jesus was a part?
3. Which alternative did Jesus recommend and why?
4. According to Thurman, what did Jesus mean by, "the Kingdom of Heaven is in us"?

#### **Week 3: Chapter 2, "Fear"**

1. What is the relationship, according to Thurman, between fear and violence? How does this relationship between fear and violence effect one's sense of self? What are some expressions of this relationship between fear and violence on the oppressed?
2. How is "fear" cultivated by the oppressed? How is this "fear" related to the State and participation in the common life?
3. How does Thurman relate "fear" to "segregation?" How is "segregation" related to "religion?"

#### **Week 4: Chapter 3, "Deception"**

1. Why does Thurman characterize deception as a "technique" of the oppressed? How is this characterization related to "power?" What are some illustrations of deception as outlined by Thurman?
2. How is deception related to "truth-telling?" What are the alternatives that the oppressed have relative to the question of deception? Which alternative did Jesus choose, and why?
3. How is "truth-telling" or "sincerity" related to "freedom" and "power?"
4. Do you agree or disagree with Thurman's analysis of deception? Explain why you agree or disagree.

#### **Week 5: Chapter 4, "Hate"**

1. How does Thurman describe hatred? How does he construct an anatomy of it's

2. development?
3. How are “hatred” and “self-realization” related? How is this relationship illustrated in the lives of the disinherited? How does hatred, thusly understood, become a device by which the disinherited protect themselves from moral disintegration? How does it provide a basis for moral justification or self-righteousness?
4. Hatred, like deception, is a technique of survival according to Thurman. How does he account for this association?
5. What was Jesus’ attitude toward “hate?” Why did he counsel the oppressed against hatred?

**Week 6: Chapter 5, “Love”**

1. Thurman explains that the love ethic is central for the religion of Jesus. What were the three enemies that Jesus had to deal with in his interpretation of the love ethic? In your view, is there any relevancy in Thurman’s interpretation of Jesus to your context and the larger society?
2. Thurman writes, “The first step toward love is a common sharing of mutual worth and value”. Please explain what this means for Thurman and for your context of ministry and/or service.
3. What does Thurman mean by an “ethical field” and what is its significance for contemporary modeling of community?
4. Comment on what Thurman means by “reverence of personality” and how did Jesus define the same?