



PAYNE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Ida B. Wells and Modern Day Lynching Bible Study

An example of an Online Bible Study based on #Charlestonsyllabus delivered to the Third Episcopal District of the A.M.E. Church Planning Meeting, Columbus, Ohio, November 6, 2015.

Originally hosted on Google Docs/Google Hangouts.

*Based on Anne E. Streaty Wimberly's Storylinking Method in [Soul Stories: African American Christian Education](#)

This study reflects on the mourning mothers of children victimized by police brutality and builds on the story of Sandra Bland as the everyday story. Sandra Bland was found hanged in a jail cell in Waller County, Texas, on July 13, 2015 after being pulled over for a minor traffic violation on July 10 by state trooper. The biblical text is John 19:25-27 when Jesus tells his beloved disciple to watch over his mother from the cross. Mary's child son is in trouble -- arrested, unfairly tried, condemned, and now dying, but she is there and Jesus gives her back to his beloved disciple, essentially to the church to deal with, to mourn with, and to love on. The African American heritage story is a selection from the Ida B. Wells-Barnett's 1895, work *A Red Record: Alleged Causes of Lynching* featured on the [#CharlestonSyllabus](#).

Phase 1 (Engaging the Everyday Story)

Activity 1: Disclose the Everyday Story (Case Study Video)

[Sandra Bland's Mother Speaks With Rev. Al Sharpton](#)

- Listen for contexts: who was Sandra Bland? Where is her home, community, church, workplace?
- #whathappenedtosandrabland? What happened to Sandra Bland?

Activity 2: Critically Reflect on the Case Study, Identify with the Case Study

- In what ways are Sandra Bland and her mother's story your story?
- What experiences or memories does their story trigger in you?
- Did anyone have difficulty relating to the story? What was difficult? Why was it difficult?

Phase 2 (Engaging the Christian Faith Story in the Bible)

Activity 1: Disclose the Scripture

John 19:25-27

25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, [a] here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Image for Reflection:

<http://www.workingpreacher.org/>

[Vanderbilt University Art in the Christian Tradition](#)

[Jesus Mafa](#)

JESUS MAFA. The Crucifixion; Jesus dies on the cross, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=48390> [retrieved November 5, 2015].

Musical Offering:

Listen to Aretha Franklin "[Mary, Don't You Weep](#)"

Activity 2: Focus on the Bible as Mirror

- Who are Jesus, Mary, Mary Magdalene, Jesus' Sister and the disciple whom he loved?
- Who are the church and community in this moment? How are they present?
- What does the painting say about the dynamics of mourning? Who are the bearers of mourning?
- How does this song make you feel? What memories do you have surrounding it?
- What story is being told in the song?
- When we think about police brutality in 2015, what does this song bring to mind?
- Who is Pharaoh in 2015? Who's in Pharaoh's Army in 2015?

Phase 3 (Engaging Christian Faith Stories from the African American Heritage)

Activity 1: Disclose the Faith Heritage Story

[Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Chapter 7 The Red Record, THE CRUSADE JUSTIFIED \(Appeal from America to the World\)](#)

- "No matter how heinous the act of the lynchers may have been, it was discussed only for a day or so and then dismissed from the attention of the public." **How does Wells-Barnett's appeal mirror what hear in the press today?**
- "To those who are not willfully blind and unjustly critical, the record of more than a thousand lynchings in ten years is enough to justify any peaceable movement tending to ameliorate the conditions which led to this unprecedented slaughter of human beings." **Why are contemporary movements like #BLACKLIVESMATTER having to justify themselves as well?**

Phase 4 (Engaging in Christian Ethical Decision Making)

Activity 1: Discerning God's Call

- What responsibility did Jesus assign the beloved disciple when he said "Here is your mother"?

Activity 2: Decide Concrete Actions

- How can the church help mothers and families of crucified children?
- How can the church engage in direct action that supports local and national police reform?

Programs and Next Steps:

<http://www.joincampaignzero.org/#campaign>

<http://mappingpoliceviolence.org/>

Closing Ritual: Go to [The Thoughts Room](#) and share your feelings and prayers with God.

* Storylinking is a process whereby we connect parts of our everyday stories with the Christian faith story in the Bible and the lives of exemplars of the Christian Faith outside the Bible. Phase One engages the everyday story, phase two engages the Christian Faith Story in the Bible, phase three describes liberation and vocational strategies while engaging Christian Faith Stories from the African American heritage and phase four calls us to discern God's call for concrete action as we engage in Christian Ethical decision making.