

# WHO WILL BE A WITNESS?

IGNITING ACTIVISM  
FOR GOD'S JUSTICE,  
LOVE, AND DELIVERANCE

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## CHAPTER 1

1. Hart writes that Jesus did not come to find “fans filled with religious sentimentality” but “followers committed in solidarity to a revolutionary movement” (p. 45). What prevents so many professing Christians from moving beyond shallow fanship and into radical discipleship?
2. How might our attempts to harmonize the four Gospels into what Hart calls a “super gospel” (p. 46) do violence to our vision of Jesus, and consequently distort our witness?
3. How does Jesus’ deeply *grassroots* ministry of deliverance call into question our current church structure and ministry practices?
4. There is a tendency to depoliticize the first century witness of Jesus in many faith communities. What struck you most about Hart’s insistence that we come to see Jesus as a political subversive?
5. Prayerful discernment and disruptive protest are often seen as being diametrically opposed. How does Jesus’ strategic wedding of the two provide us with a blueprint for faith-rooted justice work?

## CHAPTER 2

1. Hart asserts that, next to Jesus, Barabbas may be the most misunderstood figure in scripture. How was your view of Barabbas challenged by this chapter?
2. Barabbas was a political prisoner who had engaged in revolutionary counter-violence in his struggle against the deeply violent oppression of the Roman empire. How might this reframing help Jesus-followers to empathize with—rather than demonize—those who engage in anti-oppression tactics that do not neatly align with our own?
3. Hart tells us that both Jesus and Barabbas are caught up in the “whirlwinds of the establishment” (p. 91). How does Jesus uniquely embody what it looks like for our struggle to be animated by the wind of God’s liberating presence?
4. Too often, proponents of a non-violent third way are both distant and ultimately apathetic about the plight of the oppressed. How does Jesus’ concrete and costly non-violent resistance serve as a rebuke to those who puritanically critique uprisings from the safety of the sidelines?

## CHAPTER 3

1. In the opening of this chapter, Hart shares two stories that demonstrate the “supremacist captivity” of the church. Share an experience you’ve had that underscores this deep problem.
2. If western Christendom birthed the brutal legacy of white supremacy, how might recovering the African and Asian origins of the faith help bring into being a Christian witness rooted in solidarity and mutuality?
3. What links do you see between the “Constantinian shift” of the fourth century to our current moment? Is Trumpist Christianity an offspring of this shift?
4. How do we hold fast to our allegiance to Jesus as Lord of all creation, while not falling prey to both explicit and subtle notions of Christian supremacy in the public square?
5. This chapter makes the case that we are haunted by and tethered to a history of white settler colonial Christianity. What does deliverance from this idolatrous legacy look like? How do we practice a decolonial and liberating faith?

## CHAPTER 4

1. Pause for a few moments to think about the emotions that rose up when you first heard or read Reverend Jeremiah Wright's forceful condemnation of this nation ("God damn America!" quoted on p. 139). What would you say your initial reaction reveals about your spiritual and social formation at the time?
2. The Black prophetic tradition calls us to read US history from the margins, not from the seat of power. What painful but generative possibilities does this practice open up for us?
3. How does the seductive lie of American exceptionalism lure us into believing that reformist tweaks will properly address this nation's ills? Does the misguided idea that we can solve our problems by giving the American empire a face-lift emerge out of a refusal to face the US's true nature and history?
4. Ella Baker modeled an often-erased strand of the black prophetic tradition. How does her insistence upon mobilizing a "prophethood of believers" (p. 164), versus relying on a singular charismatic leader, align with Jesus' vision for the Church?
5. What are practical ways that Christians and churches can begin reorienting their focus towards the "weightier matters" (p. 164) of society? How do we create spaces that consistently name and confront the foundational and systemic sins that continue to shape our nation, and harm our neighbors at home and abroad?

## CHAPTER 5

1. In this chapter, Hart pushes churches to not only call for justice on the macro level of broader society, but to also practice this justice institutionally on the *micro* level. Why is it important that churches organize themselves to be micro-expressions of the delivering presence of Jesus?
2. What kind of institutional posture is needed to cultivate communities of deep belonging in the face of oppressive and divisive forces? How does the story of the aggrieved widows in Acts 6 demonstrate this posture?
3. Hart describes "first-order" changes as dealing with the surface level and symptomatic, and "second-order" changes as dealing with deeper systemic issues (p. 187). What are some dangers present in both of these steps towards authentic beloved community?
4. In the first paragraph of page 191, Hart poses a series of piercing questions that can help a church evaluate its commitment to "opening up space for belonging to others." Honestly answer and wrestle with those questions. Discuss what prayerful and concrete actions can be taken to create radical institutional change.
5. Why is it important that we name the power dynamics within our churches? How does this often-uncomfortable practice help refine our witness and re-form our practice of life together?

## CHAPTER 6

1. In this chapter Hart writes of the "schism between escapist worship communities and ... justice-oriented disciples" (p. 213). Have you experienced this tragic divide? What are some healthy ways for justice-oriented disciples to navigate this painful reality while remaining faithfully rooted in the church?
2. The exodus story reveals God as a just and holy deliverer from oppression who should be hallowed above all others. Why would a worshipping community's lack of commitment to justice be a tell-tale sign of idolatry?
3. In your own experience within the church, how has conversion been understood? How can we reclaim the early church's insistence that conversion is a radical commitment to a new way of being rooted in God's vision of a new society?
4. What role does our social positioning—class, race, gender, sexuality—play in how we are to respond to the call of discipleship?
5. Hart clearly affirms the role of the preached word in shaping justice-seeking congregations. Yet, he urges us to create participatory, dialogical space where the Spirit can speak through *whosoever*. How do our current structures of church subvert the priesthood of all believers? How does the practice of our collective priesthood spur along the work of justice?

## CHAPTER 7

1. Why is it important for disciples of Jesus to develop class-consciousness and analysis? How do Jesus' actions surrounding the story of the widow's mite in Mark's Gospel demonstrate his own attention to unjust economic realities?
2. Theologian John Haugey once wrote, "we read the Gospel as if we had no money, and we spend our money as if we know not the Gospel." In this chapter, Hart presses us to think about how even those of us who reject the prosperity gospel are functional adherents of it, in terms of how we view and interact with money. What challenge does the economically just gospel of Jesus raise to our consumer market-animated practice of Christianity?
3. Hart asserts that the early church's relationship to wealth was radically different from ours. He says that their practice of giving to the poor was "with an eye towards redistribution and not merely comfortable charity" (p. 250). What is the difference between comfortable charity and wealth redistribution? Where do we see radical calls for redistribution in Jesus' ministry?
4. What would it mean for your life, as Hart puts it, to be "seized by the economic revolution of God" (p. 250)? How can we participate in the spirit of the Jubilee tradition as individuals and churches?
5. How can white churches actively and holistically disrupt the living legacy of "financial apartheid" (p. 259)?

## CHAPTER 8

1. Non-violent struggle and resistance are often understood as passive. How do both the peacemaking ministry of Jesus and the Kingian philosophy of non-violence push back on that notion?
2. How does the church's call to affirm the dignity of human life, to practice enemy love, and to bear the cross uniquely position it to contribute to broader movements for social change?
3. Hart suggests that churches can play various roles in protest movements. How can the church meaningfully contribute to such movements without falling prey to a "savior complex" (p. 301)? How would exhibiting an authentic willingness to follow movement leadership, versus trying to assume the role of leading, be an expression of the wisdom and love of Jesus in our current moment?
4. Hart writes, "Community organizing seeks to empower and give voice directly to the people affected so they can change their communities" (p. 302-303). Where do you see this ministry of empowerment and giving voice to the most vulnerable in the ministry of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels?
5. In your personal experience, how have communities of faith engaged electoral politics? What landmines are inherent in the work of electoral politics and how can Jesus-followers navigate around them?

## CHAPTER 9

1. The call to love God and neighbor is the central command of scripture. Yet, in many communities of faith, this radical call is peripheral. How does keeping love at the center sustain our witness to God's delivering power?
2. Hart writes that "love of God is manifested *through* our love of our fellow humans" (p. 336). What does he mean by this? Why is this notion so important?
3. How does the sentimentalization of agape love uphold the status quo of oppression?
4. How do the life, death, and resurrection Jesus demonstrate an ethic of love that seeks to overcome every barrier to community, liberation, and human flourishing?
5. In the closing of this book, Hart writes that love "remains the most powerful instrument for creating the possibility of radical deliverance of even oppressors instead of perpetuating cycles of violence and harm" (p. 363). What are some cycles of harm that the love-rooted pursuit of justice could heal and interrupt in your local context?