

GO AND...

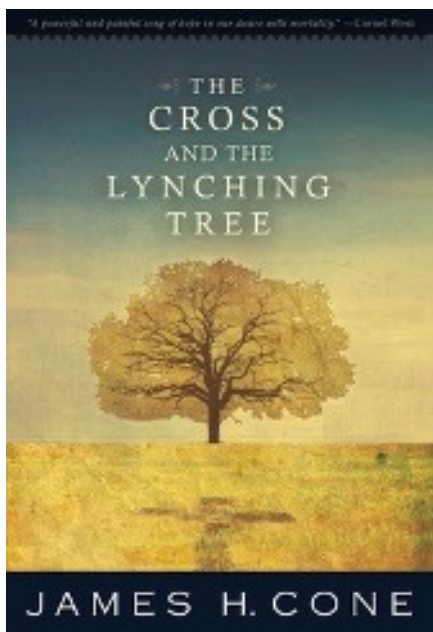
Tell the Story

Stories that Challenge our Understanding of the Story and How we Tell it

As we tell THE story of Christ's love for all, I invite you to read these books which may challenge you to think deeper about how others tell the story and how their interpretation of the story may be different than yours.

Below is a summary of each book with some "dig deeper" questions. And don't just read the books on your own! I encourage you to read them with a friend and have some discussion around the questions. Can't find a friend to talk with? E-mail me at gretchen@nebraskasynod.org. I'd love to dig deeper in these books with you and others!

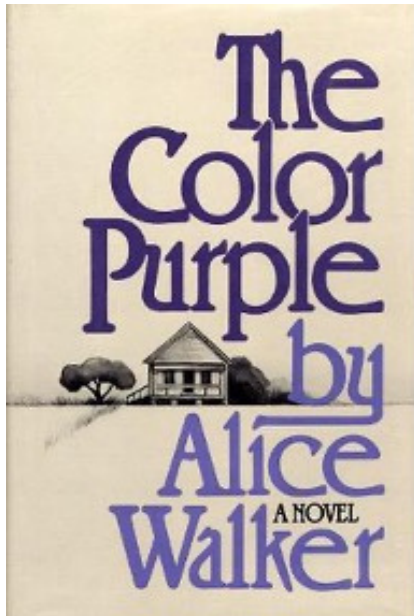
The Cross and the Lynching Tree



“The cross and the lynching tree are the two most emotionally charged symbols in the history of the African American community. In this powerful new work, theologian James H. Cone explores these symbols and their interconnection in the history and souls of black folk. Both the cross and the lynching tree represent the worst in human beings and at the same time a thirst for life that refuses to let the worst determine our final meaning. While the lynching tree symbolized white power and black death, the cross symbolizes divine power and black life God overcoming the power of sin and death. For African Americans, the image of Jesus, hung on a tree to die, powerfully grounded their faith that God was with them, even in the suffering of the lynching era.” (Orbis Books summary)

Dig Deeper Questions:

What does the cross represent in your life? What image does it convey and how does it relate to your own cultural story? How is that story interwoven into Christ's story of the Good News? What symbol in your own cultural upbringing represents the worst in human beings? How do you see God overcoming the power of sin and death in your life? What revelations did you have while reading this book? Did it change your view of the cross? What challenged you in this book?



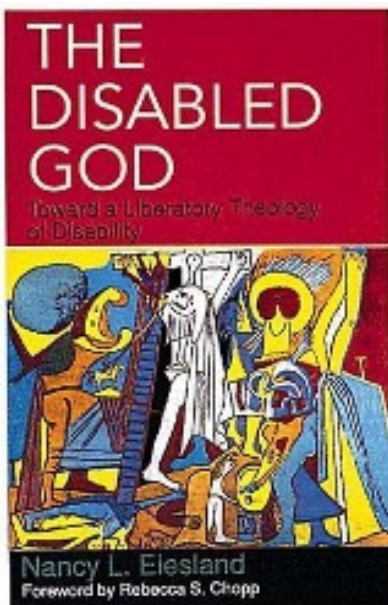
The Color Purple

This book follows Celie's life through a series of letters, first written to God and later written to her younger sister Nettie. When the book begins, Celie is a 14-year-old girl living in rural Georgia. She lives in poverty, with no access to education and has been beaten, raped, and impregnated by her father Alphonso. Alphonso steals the babies and presumably kills them in the woods. Celie writes to God because she doesn't have anyone else to turn to. Why would anyone else listen to her? However, letter 73 comes with a drastic shift as Celie stops writing to God and turns to Nettie. Celie says, "God would never listen to a poor black woman—that God has not listened to her throughout her life." She starts to write to Nettie because she hopes Nettie might read her letters.

Celie shares her opinions with Shug Avery, a "nasty woman" in the community who is a lounge singer who has relationships with many men and eventually with Celie. Shug and Celie have conversation about what God looks like, what God wants, and how Shug feels God's presence. The book continues to follow Celie's life through 94 total letters including letters from Nettie to Celie.

Dig Deeper Questions:

If you were to write a letter to God today, what would it say? How would it be different than a letter written five or ten years ago in your life? Celie and Shug's discussion centers around what God looks like. For Shug, that's bigger than a single image, which is a concept Celie wrestles with. How do you see God? How does that affect how you tell THE story? How does it affect how others hear the story when they may not view God through the same lens as you do? How does Nettie's view of God change throughout the book and how does it affect how Nettie tells the story?



The Disabled God

This book challenges the reader to see THE story by seeing the main character (God), through a different lens. In chapter five, she shares her vision of God in a "sip puff" wheelchair (typically used by paraplegics) and in chapter six she explores how this plays out in the Eucharist. She writes, "In the Eucharist, we encounter the disabled God, who displayed the signs of disability, not as a demonstration of failure and defect, but in affirmation of connection and strength." Goodreads summarizes the book with the following description: "Draws on themes of the disability-rights movement to identify people with disabilities as members of a socially disadvantaged minority group rather than as individuals who need to adjust."

Highlights the hidden history of people with disabilities in church and society. Proclaiming the emancipatory presence of the disabled God, the author maintains the vital importance of the relationship between Christology and social change. Eiesland contends that in the Eucharist, Christians encounter the disabled God and may participate in new imaginations of wholeness and new embodiments of justice.”

Dig Deeper Questions:

Does changing the way you see the image of God change the way you tell the story? How do you see God’s body? How might others see it and is it ok to see it differently? How can you see signs of disability as affirmations of connections and strength in Christ’s story and in our story?