

APOSTLE

Reading Group Discussion Guide

The Author's Notes at the back of the book provide some interesting topics for discussion. Below are several additional thought-provoking questions for your group to mull over.

1. APOSTLE opens with a scene in which a young woman is abandoning her child to the Christians rather than destroy him. We know that the Early Christians took in waifs and established what would become the first foundling homes, orphanages and hospitals. Do you think people sought them out or did Christians go in search of people in need of help and/or rescue? What applications does the story of Tryphena and Moshe say to the modern practice of abortion?
2. We know from historical records that the Early Christians came from many walks of life. There are even cases of the Emperor's children being converted. In the book, Yudah leaves his parent's home to enter the Roman world. Then, just as now, the path to success lay in making the right connections. Do you think there were times when the parents might have been supportive of a young man's aspirations to become part of the Roman hierarchy?
3. An ongoing thread in the story is the possibility that Yudah may be the serial killer terrorizing Antioch's pleasure district. Roman society was very accepting of prostitution. Would they have viewed the murder of a prostitute any differently than we do today? Were there serial killers in ancient times? Given the lack of investigative science, could they have been readily identified?
4. Another recurring theme is the retention of old ways of living and the gulf that existed between Jewish and Gentile converts. This is especially apparent when Rivkah has her mother-daughter talk with Channah before her marriage. These may have simply been facts of life that everyone accepted or they may have been points of serious contention. What do you think?
5. The Bible never states exactly why Mark returned. The book attributes it to migraines. What other causes could there have been? Keeping in mind that Mark was still very young at the time, could the reason have been other than a physical ailment?
6. The autistic giant, Pavlos, takes to the streets to avenge his mother's murder. Do you think seeking your own revenge was a common practice of the times? How responsive would the authorities have been? What would have been the Christian response?
7. Channah visits Paul and tells him the exact moment when the Lord ~~stuek~~ struck him blind. Is this the way you imagined it? How would have you imagined Paul's conversion?
8. Ancient traditions say that Ignatius of Antioch was the one who pushed for a change in the Sabbath from Saturday, the last day of the Jewish week, to Sunday, the first day of the week. Like many things during the transitional period, some Early Christians observed two days of worship. What is your feeling about the Sunday observance? Can an argument be made to return to a Saturday Sabbath?