

Resources About the Death Penalty

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Print Resources

Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States. By Sister Helen Prejean. New York: Vintage Books, 1993. Sister Helen Prejean served as spiritual adviser to Patrick Sonnier, a man on death row in a Louisiana prison, convicted of the murders of two teenagers. She tells a powerful story and confronts the complex issues of capital punishment.

Executing Justice: The Moral Meaning of the Death Penalty. By Lloyd Steffen. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1998. This book explores all the moral justifications that have been put forth to defend the use of capital punishment, and ultimately asks what the Christian response should be.

Video Resources

Death Penalty Series. A series of three videos that were taped at a conference on the death penalty at First Community Church, Columbus, Ohio, in October, 2002. The quality of the tapes is fair.

Biblical Issues: Dr. David Van Dyke, Presbyterian Minister, addresses the biblical issues regarding the death penalty.

Family Issues: Rachel Muha whose son was murdered, and Don Huey whose father was murdered and whose son was later killed by a drunk driver, talk about why they oppose the death penalty.

Legal Issues: Public defender Gregory Meyers talks about the “failures and foibles” of the death penalty.

Related Resources

Crime and Community in Biblical Perspective: Plans and Resources for 14 Sessions. By Kathleen E. Madigan and William J. Sullivan. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1980. Group members analyze and evaluate criminal justice in light of Judeo-Christian Perspectives concerning justice and the caring community.

The Expanding Prison: The Crisis in Crime and Punishment and the Search for Alternatives. By David Cayley. Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1998. Cayley argues that our overpopulated prisons are more reflective of a society that is becoming increasingly polarized than of an actual surge in crime. He also considers alternatives that emphasize restitution and repentance rather than retribution.

Instead of Prisons: A Handbook for Abolitionists. New York, NY: Prison Research Education Action Report, 1976. An older volume that envisioned a day when prisons would be replaced by a number of alternative responses to crime.

Jail and Prison Ministry for the 21st Century. Dr. W. Thomas Beckner and Jeff Park, eds. A Coalition of Prison Evangelists Publication, 1998. A Manual for those who would seek to be part of effective prison ministry.

Overcrowded Time: Why Prisons are So Crowded and What Can Be Done. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 1982. An older, but still pertinent, volume about overcrowded prisons, the effects of overcrowding, and possible strategies for addressing the issues.

Time To Build? The Realities of Prison Construction. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, 1984. Raises the question of whether new prison construction is the answer to overcrowded prisons and what are the alternatives.

Victims of Crime: A Christian Perspective. By Henrietta Wilkinson and William Arnold. Presbyterian Criminal Justice Program, 1982. A study and action guide for congregations.

Journey to Forgiveness. (Video) Seven emotional stories of people who have dealt with anger and forgiveness in the face of racial injustice, violent death, and terminal illness.