

Appendix A: Follow-up Group Activity Crime & Punishment in Armstrong's Sounder



GROUP ONE

1. Read Proverbs 6:30-31 and 30:8-9. What can we learn from these verses about a wise man's approach to impoverished circumstances?
(We learn that a wise man understands the weakness in his own nature. We also see an understanding of genuine poverty and our responsibility not to despise those in need. Finally, we see that the punishment for stealing is to "restore sevenfold.")
2. In light of the way the author portrayed the setting and characters, what can we deduce was the motivation for the father's theft? (e.g., pp. 7, 9) *(His family is starving, despite the fact that he has pursued every available means for providing. His motivation is desperation.)*
3. What are some possible explanations for the author's choice to leave the human characters unnamed? *(It implies the universality of the oppression and the view toward the black man at that time; he was treated as having no more value than an animal.)*

GROUP TWO

1. Read Exodus 22: 1, 4, 25-27; 23:11 and Leviticus 6:2-6; 25:35. What can we learn from these verses about the demands of the Mosaic law and a wise man's response to need? *(We learn that the Mosaic law demands restitution according to value; that we are to show mercy to those unable to pay debts, and that we have a responsibility to those in need. See the parable of the unmerciful servant and the 6 woes in Luke 11:39-54.)*
2. According to Mosaic Law did the father's punishment fit the crime? *(No. It was far too severe.)*
3. How did the lawmakers treat the father during the arrest, and what was his condition when he returned to his family? *(The "lawmakers" essentially committed assault and battery on the father; we learn upon his return that an explosion in the quarry left him paralyzed on one side of his body.)*
4. Sounder is a foil character to the father. What can we deduce about the father's treatment based on what the author allows us to "see" during the arrest and home-coming and what he implies through Sounder's foil character? (e.g., pp. 21-24, 107-108) *(Sounder provides a "mirror image" of what is happening to the father—in both physical abuse and destruction of spirit.)*
5. Was the lawmakers' behavior justified under Mosaic Law? Could it be justified under our constitutional law? *(The lawmakers' behavior can be justified under neither system; it was too harsh for the Mosaic law and criminal under constitutional law.)*

GROUP THREE

1. Read the following biblical passages: Proverbs 14:31; 21:13, 28:27; 29:7; Isaiah 58:6-7; I John 3:17-19; Matthew 25:42-45. List several general principles you deduce from these verses. *(A Christian—and certainly a genuinely spiritual man—will discern and respond to need. If he does not, he is rejecting not only the poor man, but God. We do not believe in a social gospel, but nor do we believe in a gospel that remains untouched by human need. Many who have claimed the name of Christ—who have worked and even succeeded in that work "for God"—when they stand before their maker will discover that their rejection and indifference to the needy in actuality was a reflection of their rejection of God and His explicit commands.)*
2. Evaluate the lawmakers' attitude toward the family's need in light of these principles. (p. 9) *(Their attitude was one of indifference and cruelty.)*
3. Evaluate the lawmakers' attitudes and behaviors in light of Proverbs 28:17. *(Their cruelty is more heinous than the father's theft.)*
4. Did these men enforce the law or commit a greater crime? *(They committed a greater crime, both under human law through assault and battery and under God's law through their indifference.)*