

Death Penalty Books for Discussion

Because the death penalty is so controversial there have been many books written on the subject. The list provided here is a sample to help you get started and is by no means exclusive. For more book options please visit the Book section of the Death Penalty Information Center's website – www.deathpenaltyinfo.org.

Against the Death Penalty: Christian and Secular Arguments Against the Death Penalty, Gardner C. Hanks, (Herald Press, 1997) - A very readable overview of the case for abolishing the death penalty.

Bloodsworth: The True Story of the First Death Row Inmate Exonerated by DNA, Tim Junkin, (Algonquin Books, 2004) - Junkin recounts the events that led first to the conviction and death sentence, and then to the freeing of Kirk Bloodsworth for the murder of a nine-year-old girl in Maryland.

Capital Consequences: Families of the Condemned Tell Their Stories, Rachel King, (Rutgers University Press, 2005) - King, of the ACLU's Capital Punishment Project, focuses her book on the impact that the death penalty has on the families of those who have been condemned to die.

Dead Man Walking, Sister Helen Prejean, (Vintage, 1994) - A profoundly moving and spiritual journey through the capital punishment system. Confronting the plight of the condemned and the rage of the bereaved, the needs of a crime-ridden society and the Christian imperative of love, *Dead Man Walking* is an unprecedented look at the human consequences of the death penalty, a book that is both enlightening and devastating.

Don't Kill in Our Names: Families of Murder Victims Speak Out Against the Death Penalty, Rachel King, (Rutgers Press, 2003) - Using first-hand accounts and third-person narrative, King presents the stories of murder victims' families in the context of the nation's on-going death penalty debate.

Executing Justice: The Moral Meaning of the Death Penalty, Lloyd Steffen, (Wipf & Stock Publishers of Eugene, Oregon 2006) - Explores the moral justification for the death penalty as it analyzes the philosophical and humanitarian arguments for and against it. The book debunks the legal and ethical arguments for the death penalty and uses the case of executed inmate Willie Darden to illustrate the moral deficiencies in the death penalty system.

Jesus on Death Row: The Trial of Jesus and American Capital Punishment, Mark Osler, (Abingdon Press, 2010) - The book offers a comparison between the trial and execution of Jesus and a capital case conducted in the U.S. justice system.

Jurors' Stories of Death: How America's Death Penalty Invests in Inequality, Benjamin Fleury-Steiner, (University of Michigan Press, 2004) - The University of Delaware Professor draws on real-life

accounts of white and black jurors in capital trials to discuss the effect of race on the sentencing process.

***Life and Death Matters: Seeking the Truth About Capital Punishment*, Robert Baldwin**, (New South Books, 2009) - Baldwin shares his evolution in a conversational, first-person style with a declared faith perspective. Written for people of all beliefs and backgrounds, he focuses on the myths and misconceptions about prisons and the death penalty discovered through his personal experiences in the Deep South.

The Biblical Truth About America's Death Penalty, Dale Recinella, (Northeastern University Press, 2004) - Using sources such as the Torah, the Talmud, and the Bible, Recinella outlines what biblical texts say regarding who is deserving of the death penalty and who is granted the authority to impose such a sentence. While exploring issues such as innocence, race, mental capacity, and prosecutorial misconduct, Recinella weaves biblical texts with current case examples.

The Executed God: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America, Mark Lewis Taylor, (Fortress Press 2001) - This work by the theologian addresses how Christians can use biblical teachings to transform the death penalty and America's criminal justice system.

The Ride: A Shocking Murder and a Bereaved Father's Journey from Rage to Redemption, Brian MacQuarrie, (Da Capo Press, 2009) - MacQuarrie explores the evolution of Robert Curley, a father whose 10 year old son Jeffrey was murdered. Curley goes "from grief to anger to activism against predators," and from being an outraged father demanding the death penalty for his son's murderer to an outspoken critic of capital punishment.

Within these Walls: Memoirs of a Death House Chaplain, Rev. Carroll Pickett, (St. Martin's Press, 2002) - Rev. Pickett examines the death penalty based on his personal experience in Texas. He recalls his 15 years as a chaplain to death row inmates in Huntsville, Texas, and provides an account of ministering to 95 men in their final hours before execution.