



Climate Changed Podcast Discussion Guide
Season Two, Episode Five
Created by Tyler Mark Nelson

Guest: Rev. Dr. Veronice Miles

Title: *If I Can't Make a Difference, then What Do I Do?*

Listening excerpt: 20:32–26:02

Welcoming Activity

Our hosts, Nicole Diroff and Ben Yosua-Davis, begin the episode by discussing what each of them is doing to practice hope. To open your time together, go around the group answering the question: What have you done to practice hope recently?

Introduction

To Climate Changed Podcast

The BTS Center's new podcast, *Climate Changed*, offers intimate interviews and conversations around some of the most pressing questions about faith, life, and climate change. Hosted by [Ben Yosua-Davis](#), Director of Applied Research, and [Nicole Diroff](#), Program Director, and produced by [Peterson Toscano](#), the podcast features acclaimed guests who are exploring what spiritual leadership looks and feels like in a climate-changed world.

To Episode

Hope — that is the essence of this conversation between Ben Yosua-Davis and Rev. Dr. Veronice Miles. She describes culturally-induced despair and how it can stall even our best intentions for acting towards transformation. Also, Ben and Rev. Dr. Veronice discuss the connection between ancestors who imagined a better future and our present moment and our responsibility to imaginatively hope today for the sake of future generations.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the implications of climate change and the place where you live? Given these implications, do you sense a call to live differently (or have you already been doing so)? In what ways?
2. Rev. Dr. Veronice summarizes culturally-induced despair as the “notion that what exists in the present must always exist, that there’s nothing that we can do to change the state of existence, [and] so we might as well continue to do what we’re doing.” Have you experienced culturally-induced despair? What does that feel like?
3. A key theme of this conversation is the potential for imagination to move us through and beyond present injustices, systems, and ways of being towards future restoration. Why do you suppose that there is such a taboo around imagining something that is absolutely new? What are the obstacles in the way of imagining new systems or ways of being?
4. In this episode, Rev. Dr. Veronice frames hope as a yearning for wholeness. She says that it assures us of God’s presence, power, and fidelity, and it calls us toward loving, just, and

restorative action in the world. How do you define hope? What does hope *do* for you (if it does anything at all)?

5. "All along, they're encouraging us towards something that they don't know a thing about themselves, but they believe it's an absolute possibility for the next generation and for the next generation, we have a responsibility then to pass that on." So says Rev. Dr. Veronica about how hope held by her enslaved ancestors imagined her into this present moment, emphasizing the moral duty of hope for the sake of future generations. What characteristics make up a good ancestor? Today, in this time of climate crisis, what could we actively hope for (or hope-fully act towards) for the sake of future generations?

Closing Activity

This exercise in hopeful imagination requires enough paper and pens/pencils/markers for everybody in the group. Recall that hope calls us toward loving, just, and restorative action in the world (see Discussion Question 4). In 2-3 minutes, draw or write something that represents one such action, whether it is in your local community or elsewhere. Even if this action seems impossible today, imagine that it is possible within your lifetime. Then have everyone share about the loving, just, and restorative action on their paper and how they hope it would lead to a transformed world.