



Just Mercy

Bryan Stevenson

A deeply human memoir from a lawyer who has spent his life fighting for the wrongly condemned, told with warmth, compassion, and quiet hope.

Reading level: Moderate

Best for: A club that loves big-hearted nonfiction and slow, soulful conversation over a warm meal

Discussion

WARM-UP

1. Where did you do most of your reading of this one, and did you find yourself needing a cozy blanket or a tea refill to get through certain chapters?
2. Was there a passage you had to pause on, reread, or read aloud to someone you love? What pulled you in?

DIGGING IN

1. Stevenson writes about mercy as something everyone needs. When in your own life has someone shown you unexpected mercy, and how did it feel?
2. Which moment in the book felt the most tender or comforting to you, even amid heavy subject matter?
3. The book gently insists that we are more than the worst thing we have ever done. How does that idea sit with you when you think about people in your own life?
4. Who in the book did you most want to wrap a blanket around and hand a cup of something warm? What made them stay with you?

GOING DEEP

1. Stevenson talks about being 'broken' as part of what allows us to feel real compassion. Was there a season in your life when being a little broken made you kinder?
2. After spending time with this book, is there a small, doable way you feel softly nudged to show up for someone, in your family, neighborhood, or community?

On the table

- 🍲 **Slow-simmered chicken and dumplings**
A nod to the Southern kitchens that anchor so much of the book, served hot from one big pot
- 🍲 **Skillet cornbread with honey butter**
Humble, warm, and meant for sharing, just like the communities Stevenson honors
- 🍰 **Peach cobbler with vanilla ice cream**
An Alabama classic, comforting and a little indulgent for a tender evening

To sip

- ☕ **Sweet tea with lemon and mint (no alcohol)**
A porch-sipping Southern staple, easy to keep on the table all night
- ☕ **Spiced apple cider, warmed on the stove (no alcohol)**
Soothing, hands-around-the-mug comfort for a heartfelt conversation
- 🍷 **Bourbon hot toddy**
A gentle Southern nightcap for a reflective close to the evening

Run of show

- 7:00 Arrivals and warm mugs**
Greet folks with cider or tea at the door, soft playlist already going
- 7:15 Comfort food spread**
Plate up family-style; let people settle in before any structured talk
- 7:35 Warm-up circle**
Ask the two warm-up questions while people are still eating, no pressure to be profound
- 7:55 Heart of the conversation**
Move through the theme questions; let silences breathe and stories wander
- 8:35 Cobbler and deeper reflection**
Serve dessert and ease into the two deeper questions over toddies or cider
- 9:10 Scorecards and goodnights**
Pass out scorecards and bookmarks, share one-word reactions, send people home with leftovers

HOST TIPS

- Set out blankets or throws on the couch; this book asks people to settle in emotionally, so make their bodies cozy too
- Keep tissues nearby, casually. Some readers may get teary, and a quiet box on the coffee table is kinder than a big gesture
- Let people pass on any question. Cozy means low pressure, not full disclosure

Playlist

Soulful, prayerful, and porch-quiet, with gospel warmth and gentle folk

- 01 A Change Is Gonna Come - Sam Cooke
- 02 Take My Hand, Precious Lord - Mahalia Jackson
- 03 Glory - Common and John Legend
- 04 I'll Fly Away - Alison Krauss and Gillian Welch
- 05 Bridge Over Troubled Water - Aretha Franklin
- 06 Hard Times Come Again No More - Mavis Staples
- 07 Lean on Me - Bill Withers
- 08 Down to the River to Pray - Alison Krauss

Trivia

1. What organization did Bryan Stevenson found? (The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI))
2. In what city is the Equal Justice Initiative based? (Montgomery, Alabama)
3. In what year was Just Mercy first published? (2014)
4. What is the subtitle of the book? (A Story of Justice and Redemption)
5. Stevenson earned his law degree from which university? (Harvard Law School)
6. What memorial and museum did EJI open in 2018 to honor victims of racial terror? (The National Memorial for Peace and Justice (and the Legacy Museum))
7. Who played Bryan Stevenson in the 2019 film adaptation of Just Mercy? (Michael B. Jordan)
8. Stevenson has frequently argued cases before which court? (The U.S. Supreme Court)

Rate the book

How deeply it moved me ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Warmth of the writing ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Stories that stayed with me ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Made me want to talk to someone ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Would press into a friend's hands ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

One word for how this book left me feeling: _____

A person I want to be a little kinder to this week: _____

A line or moment I want to remember: _____

YOU'RE INVITED

Soft Light, Slow Talk, and Just Mercy

Come over for chicken and dumplings, peach cobbler, and a gentle conversation about Bryan Stevenson's tender, important book. Wear something comfy.



Plan your own book club night

Scan the code or visit bookclubnight.com

Made with Book Club Night