

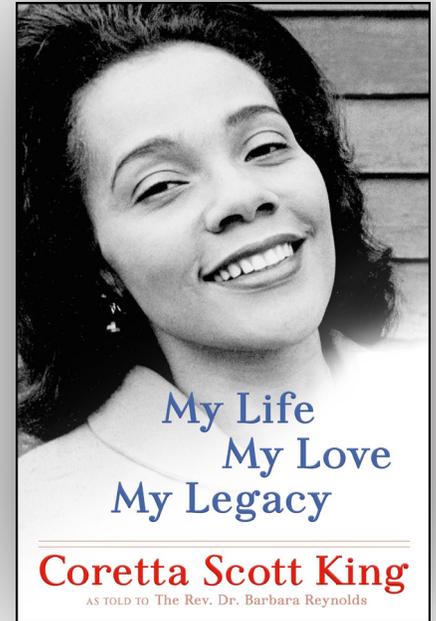


Reading Group Gold

My Life, My Love, My Legacy Coretta Scott King

About this Guide

One of the world's most inspirational figures, Coretta Scott King holds a place in history not just as the widow of Martin Luther King Jr. but as his partner in the struggle for civil rights in America, and as an advocate for peace and equality around the globe. In *My Life, My Love, My Legacy*, she tells the complete story of her remarkable life. The below questions are intended to facilitate your book group's discussion of this fascinating memoir.



Discussion Questions

1. Before reading *My Life, My Love, My Legacy*, what did you know about Coretta Scott King's life and career? Did you discover anything about her that surprised you?
2. Similarly, did you learn anything new about this important period of American history after reading Mrs. King's account? Was it surprising to read about the intermittent discord within the civil rights movement and the animosity among some of its members?
3. "Did Martin ever understand how deep my inner calling was?" (page 3). Having read this book, how would you answer Mrs. King's question?
4. "Who would have thought the ideas we discussed as young students would one day evolve into a systematic action plan that would change the circumstances and lives of black Americans, the South, the nation, and many parts of the world?" (page 38). How would you explain why Dr. and Mrs. King's ideas caught on? How were they able to realize their shared vision so fully?
5. Mrs. King points to many examples of sexist attitudes on the part of the movement's male leaderships as well as attempts by male colleagues to sideline her or minimize her role. Discuss this dichotomy between equality and chauvinism in the civil rights movement. Were Mrs. King's responses to this sexist behavior surprising to you at all?
6. What did you think of Mrs. King's and her son Dexter's account of the assassination in Chapter 22? Do you believe their theory that Dr. King's death was not perpetrated by one man but instead was the result of a government conspiracy?
7. An interesting strategic split between Mrs. King and Dr. King can be found in their respective feelings about supporting the end of the Vietnam War (see Chapter 14). Dr. King wanted to keep his anti-war stance private, yet Mrs. King wanted to use the Southern Christian Leadership Conference platform to bring the idea of nonviolence to the fore and mount a challenge against the



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war, especially on the heels of Dr. King being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Discuss this. Was there a right or wrong side to their disagreement, in your opinion?

8. “Martin had a textbook understanding of Christian-Gandhian principles of nonviolence. We often debated the difference between passivism and creative nonviolence” (page 49). What do you think the differences are between these two concepts?
9. Being the spouse of such a high profile, controversial figure—at once beloved and reviled—certainly came with enormous challenges, as Mrs. King describes in detail. Of the many sacrifices Mrs. King made in support of her husband’s mission, what stood out for you?
10. Mrs. King describes many instances when she subverted her own fears and hid her pain from her husband in order not to burden him with her struggles or distract him from his work. Talk about this instinct on her part; was it a virtue, in your opinion, or a detriment?
11. Talk about history’s perpetuation of legend; did you hold beliefs or impressions about Dr. King or Mrs. King that were altered based on what Mrs. King talks about in this memoir?
12. Discuss the book’s “Afterword” essays; did any of them give you a different perception of Mrs. King’s life and work? Which essay did you find most resonant?
13. The oppression and racism Mrs. King experienced as a child in Alabama, including the firebombing of her house, were harrowing. What do you think allowed her to rise above this trauma and avoid the anger and resentment that consumed many of her fellow African Americans during that time? Was it faith? Family? Something else?
14. Talk about the role music played in Mrs. King’s life. What did it provide her?
15. Mrs. King discusses her personal faith extensively in this book. Do you think it takes such serious religious conviction for someone to commit him- or herself to public service to the extent—and to the ends—that Mrs. King did? Is there a correlation between having a spiritual or religious practice and a willingness to sacrifice?