



Critical Thinking/Discussion Questions: –Jimmy Gentry

Website: <https://tnholcom.org/>

1. Mr. Gentry describes the difference between seeing dead German soldiers and seeing the dead in the concentration camp: “I had seen death of course. We had no problem with seeing dead German soldiers. We had no problem of that at all. We would have a sick feeling when we saw an American soldier killed, a friend of yours perhaps, someone you’d known and you’d have a real sick feeling. But this was an entirely different feeling because we didn’t understand why this would happen. I can understand why a soldier would get killed but I couldn’t understand—these people were not in uniform that were so emaciated, so pitiful. And I just didn’t understand that, and it took me a long, long time. If I was the age I am now when I thought I think I would have handled it probably different. It didn’t affect me emotionally at that time. I was just a puzzled person and after maturing perhaps and over the years, I read a lot and had gone back and thought about it a lot. I realized what I was seeing. And it becomes a very emotional thing.”

Discuss the difference between the dead German soldiers and those who died in the concentration camps. What could lead someone to believe that it is okay to kill others because of their race, religion, ethnicity, or beliefs?

2. At 7:08 in the 1991 film, Jimmy Gentry explained what would happen to the German prison guards if the Jewish prisoners got to them. The interviewer asked Mr. Gentry how he felt about the guards being killed by the prisoners. Mr. Gentry stated:

“This sounds terrible to say this in one sense and on the other hand it doesn’t. I was glad after I saw what had happened to them. I understood why they did it. I know that doesn’t sound just right, but I understood why they killed those Germans.”

Do you agree with Mr. Gentry’s feelings? Do you think that you would feel the same about it or differently? Explain your reasoning.

3. Discuss the responsibility of the Germans who lived near Dachau. According to Mr. Gentry, the odor was so bad near the camp, that it would have been impossible for them not to know that terrible things were happening there. He said that on one of the gates someone had painted, “This is the camp. You enter by the gate and leave by the chimney.”

Did the people have a responsibility to do something about the camp(s)? Why or why not? What responsibility do you have when you see others experiencing or perpetrating prejudice, racism, or attacks by others? Is it all right to simply not participate?

4. About the experience, Mr. Gentry states the following: "I think it teaches me to...I hope that everybody should know this, to appreciate everybody and respect everybody. It doesn't make a difference what ethnic group they are, what color they are. You must appreciate and respect people. Then in turn, they will appreciate and respect you, then we can get along a lot better."

How can you take action today to increase awareness about the importance of acceptance?