**Sunday Salons**

**at the Columbus School for Girls**

**Letter from Birmingham Jail**

by Martin Luther King Jr.

**Gospel of Freedom: Martin Luther King Jr.’s Letter from Birmingham Jail and the Struggle that Changed a Nation** by Jonathan Rieder

**The Letter**

King’s letter was a response to a statement published in a local newspaper which claimed the Birmingham protests were inspired by outside agitators and violent extremists. He directly addresses the eight clergyman who signed this ‘Call for Unity’.

1) What is King’s response to the objection that his protests and demonstrations are ‘untimely’?

2) What is his response to the objection that his movement loses credibility if they are willing to break laws?

3) King frequently cites or refers to religious and historical figures. Are there any particularly compelling examples? How does this help him make his case?

4) Why did King risk alienating his supporters in the religious community by critiquing the church? (or at least many churches and faith leaders?) What specifically does he find fault with?

5) What quotes or passages did you find most surprising, moving, or memorable?

6) How can we better understand contemporary protests against racial inequality in light of King’s letter?

**Historical Context / Analysis** (Rieder’s *Gospel of Freedom*)

7) How, according to Rieder, is King like a diplomat in the first half and a prophet in the second half of the letter?

8) The second day of mass student demonstrations and arrests (Double D-day of the Children’s Crusade, May 3rd 1963) saw Bull Conner unleash his dogs and firehoses against non-violent protestors. By May 10th the movement announced its victory. What agreements had they negotiated with the city and what was the response from white racists, indignant about the changes?

9) How did the Kennedy administration hinder or support King’s efforts?