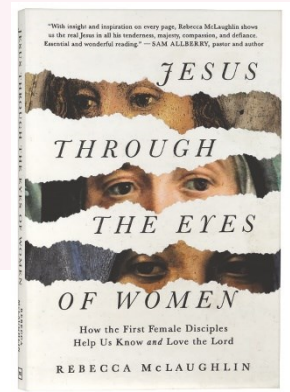




LEADER'S GUIDE

JESUS THROUGH THE EYES OF WOMEN BY REBECCA MCLAUGHLIN



"The four New Testament Gospels tell multiple stories of Jesus relating to women. Poor women. Rich women. Sick women. Grieving women. Old women. Young girls. Jewish women. Gentile women. Women known for their sinfulness. Women known for their virtue. Virgins and widows. Prostitutes and prophetesses. Looking through their eyes, we see a man who valued women of all kinds – especially those vilified by others. Indeed the way that Jesus treated women tore up the belief that women are innately inferior to men: a belief that was pervasive in the ancient world."

REBECCA MCLAUGHLIN

THEMES

Womanhood

Theology

Trustworthiness of Scripture

Jesus's Earthly Ministry

HEADS UP! (TRIGGERS AND DELICATE TOPICS)

Abuse and mistreatment of Women and Children

BOOK SUMMARY

In the past 2,000 years, countless women have been dismissed and devalued by their brothers in Christ. This misrepresentation of Christianity has left many to believe that, at its core, Christianity is a misogynistic religion that tramples, silences and disregards women.

Rebecca presents a gentle yet profound and scholarly correction of this wrong thinking. "Rather than view women as risks, liabilities or burdens, Jesus invites them to draw near" and "Rebecca McLaughlin invites us to examine the stories of women throughout the ministry of Jesus" (Jen Wilkin).

This book is incredibly thought-provoking and soul-stirring. Rooted in theology, the radiant beauty of Jesus and his counter-cultural love, respect and encounters with women are told through graceful storytelling.

READING SCHEDULE (FOR ONE MONTH)

You may consider pairing up within your group to study this book and the questions at the end of each chapter more in-depth. Women can connect with a partner during the week after reading the allocated chapters to share their thoughts. This can be done in person, via email, voice memo or video call.

Week 1 – Introduction & Chapter 1

Week 2 – Chapter 2 & Chapter 3

Week 3 – Chapter 4 & Chapter 5

Week 4 – Chapter 6 & Conclusion

Monthly Gathering – Use BTB Bookclub Kit for group discussion.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS & TALKING POINTS

1

Q. Many believe "Christianity is misogynistic. A religion that tramples, silences and disregards women" (p10). Can you relate to these accusations?

TALKING POINTS

In the past 2,000 years, countless women have been dismissed and devalued by their brothers in Christ. This mistreatment is a misrepresentation of Christ and Christianity.

We may have experienced trauma or hurt from men who confess Christianity. Some circumstances could include the following:

- Abusive husbands, fathers, or family members.
- Oppressive church leadership (Ministers, Pastors, Ministry Leaders, Members etc.)
- Being disregarded as inferior or not as intelligent because we are women.
- Felt forced or coerced into traditional gender roles and stereotypes against our will.

This conversation must be kept God honouring, without slander and aggression towards men, who are imperfect sinners and made in God's image – just as women are.

If anyone openly shares or hints that they are experiencing abuse, ensure you speak to them privately after the meeting. Confirm they are safe and seek support to help them through your church, a health professional or the police.

2

Q. Why is the 'Gospel of Mary' both unreliable and unnecessary?

TALKING POINTS

- "While the four New Testament Gospels were all written within the lifetimes of eyewitnesses to Jesus's life, the Gospel of Mary is believed to have been written in the early – to mid-second century – well after eyewitnesses died out" (p20).
- The Gospel of Mary is "Gnostic" and depends much more on Greek philosophy than Hebrew Scripture.
- "The Gospel of Mary does not give us an account of Jesus's earthly life" (p20).
- The four New Testament Gospels give us both a clearer picture of Jesus and his love towards the women he encountered through his earthly ministry.

3

Q. "Why were women drawn to Christianity?" (p12). Discuss.

TALKING POINTS

Christianity upended the belief that men had the right to dominate women, children, servants and enslaved people – or any human – weaker or in a 'lower class' than themselves:

- "Leaders of the Christian church preached and urged an ethic of love and service" (p13).
- "This ethical reversal. Based on Jesus's words and actions, made Christianity especially attractive to women in the ancient world and formed the basis for our modern belief that women are fundamentally equal to men" (p13).
- Christianity was entirely counter-cultural; suddenly, women were acknowledged as equal, set apart, daughters of the living God and valuable.

4

Q. "How do we know we can trust the Gospels?" (p17).

TALKING POINTS

The Gospels were passed down orally through *eyewitness* accounts and testimonies;

- Women are vital to the Gospel story. In these times, this would have been a stumbling block for many (and if the story was man-made, it's unlikely women would have been included in the way they were).
- Mark's gospel was written approximately 35-45 years after the events it records, during a period when eyewitnesses were alive.
- "When the Gospel authors came to write accounts of Jesus's life, they had a wealth of testimony to draw from- not least, the testimony of Jesus's female disciples" (p139).
- There are thousands of copies of the Gospels made independently of one another. These manuscripts have been compared and contain reasonable/explainable human errors such as "minor differences which make no substantial difference to the text" (p139).

5

Q. Read Mary's speech from Luke 1:46-55 and discuss.

TALKING POINTS

"She [Mary] recognises the extraordinary privilege she has and how all generations will call her blessed. But rather than focusing on herself, Mary pours herself out in praise to God" (p38). In unforeseen circumstances – even those God has intended to bless us with - we can be prone to looking inward in grief, loss, frustration or selfishness. Mary understands her circumstances could lead to being ostracised, stoned to death, publically shamed and cut off from her community, yet she decides in her heart to praise.

Luke 1:46-55:

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever." (ESV: English Standard Version).

6

Q. "As we look through this Samaritan woman's eyes in this moment, we see Jesus as a Jewish man trampling on the ethnic and social barriers of his day" (p85). Discuss Jesus's encounter with the woman at the well.

TALKING POINTS

"This woman [the Samaritan woman] is the first person in John's Gospel to whom Jesus explicitly reveals himself as the Christ, and she is the last person with whom a respectful rabbi should have been spending time alone" (p84);

- "Jews saw Samaritans as both racially and religiously contaminated." (p84).
- Jesus doesn't need a drink from this woman; he is there with her because of what he can give her.
- When Jesus says to her, "Go, call your husband", he is not trying to shame her. He's telling her that he knows who she is, even before they begin speaking. "He uses what he knows of her identity to reveal more of his" (p88).
- "We all long to be deeply known and loved. But so often we feel the need to manage how much we're known, because if people really knew the truth about us – our darkest thoughts, our envy, our deceit, our lust, our failed relationships – we fear that we would not be loved. In Jesus, this woman met a man who knew her to the core. He could have ignored her... Instead, he met her deepest need and told her who he is" (91).
- Many believed in Jesus because of the Samaritan woman's testimony.

7

Q. How do we see Jesus through the eyes of the women he healed?

TALKING POINTS

"In all of the stories told of Jesus healing women, the women are anonymous... except for one" (p105). The healing of Peter's mother-in-law (p104-106):

- "In Jesus's kingdom, serving isn't women's work. It's everybody's work" (p106).
- When Peter's mother-in-law was healed, her response was to begin serving immediately. She is not simply a role model for women but for all, and she directs us toward the true servant leader – Jesus.

The grieving Widow of Nain (p109-112):

- When Jesus saw the grieving widow, who had lost her only son and provision, he had compassion on her and brought her son back from the dead.
- This act of compassion shows Jesus as Lord, who provides and protects the widows, the oppressed, and the fatherless.
- Jesus meets our needs amidst our grief and before we even ask for help.
- "Just as he told this woman not to weep, so Jesus will one day wipe every tear from our eyes, if we will only trust in him (rev. 21:4)" (p112).

The Bleeding Woman and the Dying Girl (p112-122):

- Jesus is the "one she grasps at in her desperation, her final hope for healing, her last resort when her money is gone and her doctors have failed" (p114).
- Yet, she is also fearful because her chronic condition means she is unclean; therefore, touching Jesus would transfer the unclean state. "So, rather than asking Jesus for help, she comes up behind him and reaches for his clothing unawares" (p114).

- Immediately healed, she trembles as she presents herself at Jesus's feet as the one having touched him.
- Instead of Jesus condemning her, he affirms her saying, "Daughter, your faith has made you well" (Mark 5:34).
- "She's his daughter. Of course she has the right to touch him" (p116).
- "The way Jesus receives this bleeding woman shows he doesn't shy away from the physicality of femaleness" (p115).

8

Q. "How do we see Jesus through the eyes of the repentant prostitutes?" (p130).

TALKING POINTS

"We see him as the only man who welcomes them not for what he can get but for what he can give" (p130):

- Jesus does not count their past against them but forgives the repentant and welcomes them into his kingdom.
- "We see him [Jesus] as the source of her [the sinful woman's] forgiveness and the object of her love" (p135).
- Jesus loved and valued women, including prostitutes.
- Jesus upheld faithful marriage as the only context for sex. Jesus's sexual ethics truly lead to human flourishing, particularly for women who are physically and emotionally harmed during prostitution and casual sex.

Jesus's acceptance and forgiveness of tax collectors and prostitutes doesn't condone their behaviour:

- "Jesus offers free and full forgiveness for the tax collectors and prostitutes who come to him" (p128).
- The religious leaders of the time despised Jesus's welcome of repentant sinners.
- "The question for people wanting to enter [Jesus's kingdom] is not, 'Are you a sinner?' but 'Have you repented?'" (p128).

9

Q. "How do we see Jesus through the eyes of the many women who watched him being crucified?" (p152).

TALKING POINTS

"All four Gospels invite us to see Jesus's death and resurrection through the eyes of women" (p148):

- Jesus, the one these women love, and have followed throughout his earthly ministry, is broken, beaten, mutilated, mocked and hated right before their eyes.
- The man these women had put their hope in was now hanging, broken and despised on a Roman cross. Jesus has long been their hero, teacher, healer and King, and now through their eyes, it must have seemed hopeless and confusing.
- Despite it all, the women remained with Jesus at the cross while his male disciples did not.
- All four Gospels record the significance of the women's presence as the first see the resurrection.
- "In a culture where women were often silenced, Jesus commissions a female disciple to announce his resurrection to his male disciples" (p165).

10

Q. Has the way you see Jesus changed since reading this book? If so, how?

TALKING POINTS

In the Gospel of John, Mary says, "I have seen the Lord" (John 20:18). Looking at Jesus through the eyes of the women he healed, taught, loved, forgave, died for and trusted to announce his resurrection is truly a beautiful sight.

Jesus's counter-cultural treatment of women and earthly ministry displays his high regard, love for, and care for women. Jesus affirmed that women are made equal to men, created in the image of God, called daughters of the most high, and therefore have intrinsic value.



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