

40 Women of the Bible

Study Week 1

6th March

6th March

Opening Prayers

Overview of the book

What is the Author telling us?

Read the bible passages as scripted

Focus on the reflections

What do you want to get from the course?

For Next Weeks Meeting read chapters 1-8. Bring your thoughts and concerns with you.

Closing Prayers: The Lords Prayer, The Prayer of Mary and the Grace.

What do we want to get from the Course?

- A better knowledge of the women in the bible
- Friendship and fellowship
- Help with daily life - a walk with good through this reading
- Why unseen?
- Influence of women in/on our Christian lives

Reflections

1. What motivated Herodias to hate John so much that she wanted him dead?
2. Once he was beheaded, did it make her life any easier or change it in any way?
3. Did Salome know what she was asking for when she asked for his head on a charger?
4. Was she naïve and obeying her mother or did she understand and was in cahoots with her?
5. What type of women were they?

Responses

1. Beware women with grudges.
2. Herod weak willed- led by Herodias and herod was also weak willed.
3. Once John was beheaded Herodias was as pleased as punch. She had a plan it had worked and she had got away with it . The story doesn't tell us but did she really live happily every after.
4. Salome controlled by her mother, she may have been naïve, why didn't se take half of Herods kingdom when it was offered.
5. What type of women were they, Need we ask!!

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Study Week 2

13th March

13th March

Opening Prayers

Discuss your observations of Eve, Sarai, Hagar, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Dinar and Tamar. (6 Mins. each)

For Next Weeks Meeting read chapters 9-16. Bring your thoughts and concerns with you.

Closing Prayers: The Lords Prayer, The Prayer of Mary and the Grace.

Eve

Reflections

Is your body male or female, a source of shame for you?

Where has this shame come from?

How could you help children or teenagers you know to grow up without such shame?

Responses

**More embarrassment than shame!
Possibly change.**

Peer pressure from others. Models, Internet

**Encouragement to accept what they are, what they have, what they want to have
(Copy) I want syndrome.**

Sarai

The Lord has kept me from having children. Go sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family

Reflections

When have you experienced desperation like this?

How did it make you behave?

Where in your life do you need God's grace to transform your disgrace?

Responses

Not felt desperation, but frustration about others situations.

Desperation from acute financial situations.

We need God's grace all the time in our lives. Full Stop.

Hagar

She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: 'You are the God who sees me' for I have said, 'I have now seen the one who sees me,'

Reflections

Do you ever feel like a bit part in someone else's story?

Do you think other people ever think that about you?

What difference does it make to know that God sees you and knows you, and that he values those people you don't even notice or care about?

Responses

Invisible part sometimes, not seen by others, we all have our part to play in life.

Brother sister relationship older younger could make you a bit part in that situation.

God sees all and we are blessed so we all matter; God is omnipotent.

Rebekah

'My son, Let the curse fall on me.'

Reflections

Do you find it hard to trust that God will fulfil his promises without having to compromise on your principles?

The New Testament defines love as laying down one's life for another. (John 15:13 and 1 John 3:16).

Are there limits to what this sacrifice should entail?

Responses

God will always put things right we have nothing to fear.

Boundless faith.

Different levels of sacrifice. War, saving the life of person or pet.

Different kinds of sacrifice, comfort in living standards, giving life to God

Rachel

Reflections

Why is envy such a self-destructive emotion?

'How did it effect Rachel?'

Whose life do you envy?

Do you think you would be satisfied if you were to have what those you envy have?

Responses

Envy is only self destructive if allowed to consume like Rachel. OK if controlled.

Envy no-one

Be satisfied with what you have, the grass is not always greener on the other side.

Leah

Then Leah said, 'How happy I am! The women will call me happy.'

Reflections

With whom do you compare yourself?

In what ways does that person seem to have been more blessed than you?

Examine your own life to see how God has blessed you and give thanks for that?

Responses

I try not to compare , with others, open book me. Family traits are comparable?

We are all blessed by God.

I am blessed god provides all my needs. God gives us all gifts it is what we do with them that counts.

Dinah

When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw her, he took her and raped her.

Reflections

Have you ever witnessed a woman being sexually harassed or abused?

How did you respond?

Have you ever been treated in a way that made you feel worthless?

What difference would it have made if someone had stood up for you?

Responses

Tried to intervene in abuse and was then threatened by the woman. In those time what happened was normal practice. Women can give as good as they get.

I have never been treated as worthless so the situation has never arisen. I am blessed to have many friends / family who support me and care for me.

Tamar

'She is more righteous than I, since I wouldn't give her my son Shelah.'

Reflections

How far would you go to make sure that you were counted among the family of God's people?

What has it cost you already?

Has it been worth it?

Responses

Daily life gods family, Never reject me, always there to support me. We are God's people.

Not cost us anything, God makes our faith stronger every day. Being counted should not be measured in terms of cost or value. We know we have faith in God.

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Study Week 3

20th March

20th March

Opening Prayers

Discuss your observations of Shiphrah and Puah, Pharaoh's Daughter, Zipporah, Miriam, Mahlah, Rahab, Deborah and Jael. (6 Mins. each)

For Next Weeks Meeting read chapters 17-24. Bring your thoughts and concerns with you.

Closing Prayers: The Lords Prayer, The Prayer of Mary and the Grace.

Shiphrah and Puah

The Midwives however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt told them to do; they let the boys live.

Reflections

Are you a natural rule-keeper or a natural rule-breaker?

How can you determine when it may be good to break and right to break the rules?

Many Christians today live under oppressive Anti-Christian regimes. In what situations might it be right and good for them to deceive and disobey the authorities?

Responses

All the group were natural rule keepers.. Rules are for the obedience of fools and the guidance of wise men.

Covid issues OTT, need to be flexible. Church got it wrong should have stayed open, especially for the community.

India. Mr Modi wants purley Hindu's Christians suffer meet in secret, Priest holes

Pharaoh's Daughter

She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. 'This is one of the Hebrews babies,' she said.

Reflections

Who are the women who have done amazing things in your life? Give thanks for them.

Who are the children you know of who need protection, care and compassion?

How can you do something amazing for them?

Responses

Mothers wives Christian women form C of E and leaders of Bible study groups.

Not known personally All children need protection, safeguarding good but OTT.

Teachers have limited time but do what they can. Local kids have it very difficult.

Zipporah

But Zipporah took a flint knife, cut off her son's foreskin and touched Moses' feet with it. 'Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me,' she said. So the Lord let him alone.

Reflections

Has God ever called you to a particular path and then set obstacles in your way?

Why do you think he might do this?

Old covenant religion was often a bloody business that involved circumcision, sacrifice and death. Why is blood so significant and how do we continue to recognise that in new covenant faith?

Responses

Not obstacles, Challenges, God is testing our faith by putting challenges in our path.

Are obstacles put there in order for you to find an alternative path.

Blood is the lifeline of Humankind. Life Blood.

Jesus sacrificed his for us. Gave up life blood. 'Blood of Christ shed for you'.

Miriam

The Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing.

Reflections

Whom are you envious of?

Whose position or status do you covet?

What place do you think should have been yours?

What do you need to repent of and where do you need to learn humility?

Responses

The group were envious of no one. They were content with life God has given us, he fulfils all our needs.

Repent of all sins make mistakes, nobody's perfect need to be more humble

God gives us space in our prayers to say sorry and repent of all our sins.

Mahalah, Noah, Hoglah, Milkah, Tirzah

Reflections

Where do you come from?

What is your story?

What is your history?

In what way are all Christians 'descendants from Abraham and heirs of the promise'?

Why is this important?

Responses

Needs research into background.

Some do, Others know little past their Grandparents. Some have family trees and we are all individuals.

We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We get to Abraham by being Jesus' brother.

Rahab

'When we heard it our hearts melted in fear and everyone's failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven and on the earth below'.

Reflections

Think how you first came to God. Was it prompted by fear or love – or both?

Does that make any difference to your trust in him now?

What have we to fear from the Lord today?

Who should be fearful of him?

Responses

Light bulb moment for some, others from baptism onwards, Parent led and through Sunday school.

Fear is a lesson in not taking God for granted. He is a God of Love.

We have nothing to fear as long as we live our lives in faith. We will make mistakes and we will be forgiven. Look at Putin!!

Deborah

'Certainly I will go with you,' said Deborah. 'But because of the course you are taking, the honour will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman.'

Reflections

Why are we slow to recognise when we need the Lord's help and so slow to cry out to him?

How have you responded to the Lord's call in your life?

With faith and courage or fear and rebellion?

Responses

Stubborn we think we can do it ourselves. We are human, we have a fear of failure and lack of confidence.

Faith and courage are always the way forward with a little fear and apprehension when we are faced with new challenges.

Jael

But Jael, Heber's wife picked up a tent peg and a hammer and went quietly to him when he was fast asleep, exhausted. She drove the peg through his temple into the ground, and he died.

Reflections

What situations do you feel powerless to change and which people do you feel too intimidated to confront?

How might God use the weak things of the world to shame the strong in those situations?

Responses

Wars, Injustices, world issue, poverty and degradation. Most don't get intimidated but some can be by powers and authority and fear of confrontation.

The strong abuse the power for personal greed and are not ashamed to use it. Those in a position to make a difference choose not to.

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Study Week 4

27th March

27th March

Opening Prayers

Discuss your observations of Delilah, The Concubine, Mara, Ruth, Hanna and Michal, Abigail and Bathsheba (6 Mins. each)

For Next Weeks Meeting read chapters 25-32. Bring your thoughts and concerns with you.

Closing Prayers: The Lords Prayer, The Prayer of Mary and the Grace.

Delilah

'See if you can lure him into showing you his great strength and how we can over power him so we can tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you one hundred shekels of silver.'

Reflections

How does live make you vulnerable?

Does your love for Christ make you vulnerable?

Why is money such a powerful temptation for people?

Do you need to guard against temptation in your life?

Responses

Many ways, please, care for. To deceit and dishonesty

No, we trust in him always.

Money is a temptation - but depends on the person, learn to manage it. The want now culture is very dangerous.

It doesn't have to be - control any weakness to temptation

The Concubine

So the man took his concubine and sent her outside to them, and they raped and abused her throughout the night, and at dawn they let her go. At day break the woman went back to the house where her master was staying, fell down at the door and lay there till daylight.

Reflections

What evidence do you see of the church and wider society being complicit in spiralling wickedness?

Are there secret and shameful things you need to make known?

Can you do something amazing for them?

Responses

The church is complicit in spiralling wickedness, cover up and paedophilia

Proliferate with money wasted millions over years. Loss of church assets. Not standing up against tyranny Putin.

Shameful stuff well hidden until press and media bring it to light

Personally we cannot make any changes

Mara

'It is more better for me than you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me.'

Reflections

Do you feel bitter when you look back on your life? Are you angry with the Lord? Do you feel he has turned his hand against you?

How can you stop bitterness taking hold?
How can you let go of grudges?

How can you learn to take hold of

Responses

Never look back and no regrets. God is always there to support you. Always look on the bright side of life.

I have no bitterness as I think of all the good things God has given me. I hold no grudges life is too short.

Ruth

At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, 'why have I found such favour in your eyes that you notice me - a foreigner?'

Reflections

How have you been shown unexpected grace?

How has the Lord shown unexpected grace?

Responses

There to support through friends and neighbours. There may be an extra dose for one off situations.

We have God's grace all the time in our Christian faith. Saying thank you when not expecting it.

Lord's prompting of others to show acts of grace.

Hannah

So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel saying, 'Because I asked the Lord for him.'

Reflections

What evidence is there of God's favour and blessing in your life?

Is there a limit you would relinquish for the Lord's sake?

Responses

God is always with us he keeps our lives stable and in control. We are all content with ourselves and the people around us

Relinquish time and effort to do what we can for God, without overcommitting. As we age there are physical limits and young people are less committed and are time poor.

Michal

As the ark of the Lord was entering the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart.

Reflections

Have you ever felt used by people you have trusted? How can you recover from that?

Why is forgiveness such an essential Christian virtue?

Who should be fearful of him?

Responses

Not used or abused we are all trusting people. Be used by people in authority who renege on promises both at work and in leisure.

Jesus tells us to love one another. Father forgive them for they know not what they do.

People who are unforgiving and allow issues to fester

Abigail

David said to Abigail, 'Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgement and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands.'

Reflections

What should a faithful Christian woman do if she were to find herself married to a man like Nabal?

When is it hard to do the right thing?

Why should you do it anyway?

Responses

Christian faith says obey him and trust in God to see her right in the end.

It can be hard to do the right thing when easier way of unscrupulous results achieve aims. Out of comfort zone.

Trust in the Lord to take care of you. It may feel awkward but you know in your heart it is right.

Bathsheba

When Bathsheba went to see King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah, the king stood up to meet her, bowed down to her and sat down on his throne. He had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat down at his right hand.

Reflections

How do you consider Christian leaders of the past? Are they great heroes of the faith?

Why is it important to recognise their sins and failings as well?

Responses

Christian leaders of the past lived in their time, as we move forward times change, they did what they need to do to be leaders and keep the house of Israel flourishing. Some were heroes and some were despots, but they held on to their ancestry.

Sins and failings not the same then as now.

Keeping the lineage was important to get to Christianity.

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Study Week 5

3rd April

3rd April

Opening Prayers

Discuss your observations of Tamar, The widow of Zarahphath, Jezebel, Athaliah, Jehosheba, Huldah, Vashti and Esther. (6 Mins. each)

For Next Weeks Meeting read chapters 33-40. Bring your thoughts and concerns with you.

Closing Prayers: The Lords Prayer, The Prayer of Mary and the Grace.

Tamar

And Tamar lived in her brother Absalom's house a desolate woman.

Reflections

How can we stop modern day Amnons from treating women the way Tamar was treated?

What refuge can we offer modern day Tamars in their grief and desolation?

Responses

Laws to prevent suffering the same treatment.
Men should be aware of the consequences.
Courts need to uphold the law.

Women should report incest/rape and speak out. Its not their fault and shouldn't blame themselves

More refuge places now. This applies to both men and women. More advice given especially in schools to young people.

The Widow of Zarephath

'I am gathering a few sticks to take home to take home to make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat – and die.-

Reflections

What are you holding on to that might stopping you from receiving the Lord's blessing in abundance?

Which promises from God do you need to have more faith in?

Responses

We feel blessed already, we have what we want, not looking for extra. God looks after us and cares for us.

We don't need God to promise anything as we have faith. Perhaps some need to have more faith without promises.

Jezebel

' At the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs will devour Jezabel's flesh. Jezabel's body will be like dung on the ground in the plot at Jezreel, so that no one will be able to say, "this is Jezabel."

Reflections

Jezebel's sins included idolatry, ruthlessness, false accusations and murder.

Who are Jezebel's heirs in today's world?

Why is Jezebel remembered differently from her Husband?

Do you think women are judged more harshly than men for similar actions?

Responses

Politicians, world leaders, Putin - Dictators all over the world .

Jezebel nasty piece of work, ruthless strong malicious.

Naboth weak and manipulated by Jezebel

Jezebel synonymous with nastiness. Women have it easier than men and treated differently bias in court towards women.

Athaliah

When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family.

Reflections

Why do we find Athaliah's actions so shocking? Do you think it seems worse because it was a woman?

Are there areas in your life where you are greedy for more?

When are you tempted to ride roughshod over other people to get what you want?

Responses

Always shocking to see or read about murder. The crime is genderless but should not happen.

No we are grateful for what we have, we have no need to want for more.

Always look for compromise to resolve issues not trample.. Our faith stops us acting like dictators. We are always looking to help others

Jeosheba

But Jeosheba, the daughter of king Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash son of Ahaziah

Reflections

Why are there so many stories in the bible about attacks on very young children and about the women who have saved some of them?

We don't know very much about Jeosheba and her life other than this one act.

What does it tell us about her and her faith?

Responses

Children are vulnerable and seen as a future threat to any ruler who is insecure. In those times rulers were short lived always wars and used to kill off competition. Women are naturally protective towards children it is their natural instinct to protect the young and innocent.

Jeosheba trusted in God , she believed he would protect her and her people.

Huldah

She said to them. "This is what the Lord the God of Israel, says: tell the man who sent you to me, "This is what the Lord says, I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the King of Judah has read."

Reflections

- Why should we fear death?
- How should we act on that fear?
- Why shouldn't we fear death?
- How can we hold on to God's promises and hope?

Responses

- We should not fear death. God will protect us. Sometimes stuff happens.
- We will be at peace with him in heaven.
- By remembering the comfortable words God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Vashti

'For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women, and so they will despise their husbands and say, "King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she would not come."'

Reflections

- Why does the character and personal life of a political leader matter?
- Why does the character and personal life of a church leader matter?

Responses

- In front of people - role models setting an example to others. Political leaders are naive they should know when they take on this type of job they are being watched by social media all the time.
- Church leaders should be squeaky clean and demonstrate their faith at all times. Lead by example to all people in faith and more. The people at grass roots are important.

Esther

'This young woman, who was also known as Esther, had a lovely figure and was beautiful.'

Reflections

- What prompts you to delight in the beauty of God's creation?
- Do you celebrate your own God given beauty?
- Do you think God delights in your outward appearance?

Responses

- God made everything and each has its purpose, he created beauty across the whole world. We should always delight in what we see Time of day, garden, scenery. Its not always perfect but doesn't have to be. Each individual will see something different to be delighted in.
- I am content with what I have, I am Happy in myself and not worried about beauty.
- It's what within that matters, God helps us to be what we are and have inner peace.

40 Women of the Bible

Study Week 6

10th April

10th April

Opening Prayers

Discuss your observations of Gomer, The Shulammite, Mary, The woman who had been bleeding, The forgiven woman, The woman at the well, Mary and Martha, and Mary Magdalene, (6 Mins. each)

Were our objectives met from the beginning of the course. If not where did it fail. What were the good points.

Closing Prayers: The Lords Prayer, The Prayer of Mary and the Grace.

Gomer

'Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another

Reflections

Why is forgiveness so important in love?

How many times has the Lord forgiven you?

How many times are you willing to forgive others?

Responses

Love and marriage us very important in life. Forgiveness is very important in all aspects of life. Love works if you forgive be tolerant and hold no grudges

God forgives us always and every day

We are willing to forgive most times, we hold no grudges. We always try to forgive but sometimes it takes time.

The Shulammite

I belong to my beloved, and his desire is for me.

Reflections

Are you longing for the bridegroom's return?

What are you most longing for about that time?

How do your experiences of human relationships help you to understand the relationship God has with his people?

Responses

No. None of us understood the question

All my relationships are based on trust and compassion and my friends are very dear to me.

God understood his people

We understood God falling out with his people, they did listen to him, they worshipped false Gods overall they were a miserable shower!

Mary

'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.'

Reflections

Is Mary right to be alarmed by the angel? Do you fear what God might be demanding of your life?

When you consider God's great salvation plan, what is your response?

Do you require responses and explanations or are you willing simply to trust? Do you think we need to understand it all?

Responses

She was not alarmed, she was perplexed, there may be some surprise and that would be a natural reaction. We have no fear follow God's guidance through thick and thin.

We have the promise of eternal life through the resurrection.

We believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

No we don't need to understand it all our faith strengthens us

The Woman who had been Bleeding

'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.'

Reflections

What shame are you holding on to?

What would happen to you if you were to trust Jesus with that shame?

What things are people shamed for in our society?

What would happen if you were to treat those people as Jesus would?

Responses

Never look back so no shame. Sins forgiven move on to the future.

We trust Jesus with our shame and our sins are forgiven.

Misdeeds and being different colour, belief, gender and disability etc.

The world would be a more tolerant place with peace and harmony. Try to accept everyone

We do treat everyone as Jesus did, not what if!

The Forgiven Woman

'Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown.'

Reflections

How much have you been forgiven by Christ?

How much do you love Christ?

Responses

All the time 100% we commit sin and he forgives us.

We turn to Christ with all our hearts and souls. Our love and faith in Christ is boundless.

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Study Week 6

10th April

The Woman at the Well

Many of the Samaritans from the town believed in him because of the woman's testimony.

Reflections

- What's your story of meeting Christ?
- Have you told people about it?
- How was meeting Christ a life changing event for you?
- Can other people see that?

Responses

- We were all brought up with knowing Christ from an early age. One of the group did have a light bulb moment later in life.
- Generally our light bulb moment has been a steady growth of progress over the years.
- Meeting Christ is a natural part of life's path
- Some people can see that through me and as I am Christ led they respect my views.

Mary and Martha

'Lord,' Martha said to Jesus, 'if you had been here, my brother would not have died.....'

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.'

Reflections

- What does it mean to you to have Christ as your dearly beloved friend?
- When suffering comes, where do you turn?
- What hope and comfort do you find in Christ?

Responses

- We are blessed to be a friend of Christ, he watches over us day and night. He is someone to talk to and our support bubble in times of need.
- I turn to Christ, my rock and my salvation.
- True rest and eternal life, I believe and trust in him

Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord.'

Reflections

- Why does it matter that a woman was given the high honour of being the first to witness the resurrection?
- Consider the women in these studies, and the women in your life, and in your church, in your family, at your workplace, among

Responses

- It doesn't and it shouldn't matter in the least. The important thing is that she did and that she gave the message to the disciples and they believed her.
- We can learn from every one regardless of gender.

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Conclusions

11th April

What do we want to get from the Course?

- **A better knowledge of the women in the bible**

We all agreed that the first objective was met.

- **Friendship and fellowship**

We all agreed that the Second Objective was met objective was met.

- **Help with daily life - a walk with good through this reading**

This objective was a little unclear and we struggled with the out come, suffice to say that daily life in biblical times was well demonstrated and documented. Thinking in terms of daily life today by comparison it did help us focus our thoughts

- **Why unseen?**

We didn't understand why they were unseen, they were all in the bible for us to read. Side comment pity some of them didn't remain unseen.

- **Influence of women in/on our Christian lives**

We have seen that women play a part in our Christian lives and so do men too.

Overall our objectives were met.

Questions on the book need to be raised and this will follow in the summary below.

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Summary

11th April

Whilst the basic concept and layout of the book were creditable, the narratives and reflections were decidedly not!

The women were selected predominantly to allow strong feminist opinion and bias, to be expressed by a writer with an agenda to make/score a point in virtually every chapter.

It was a shame that the real issues were often lost in her attempt to tip the scales, with far too many repetitive themes, particularly forgiveness, shame and trust in God.

The writer screams “personal issues” as she questions, voices doubts and often fails to clarify her own faith, seemingly having no idea where she is in relation to her walk with God.

With hindsight our Group would have chosen to undertake a “journey to the Cross” as our Lenten discipline.