

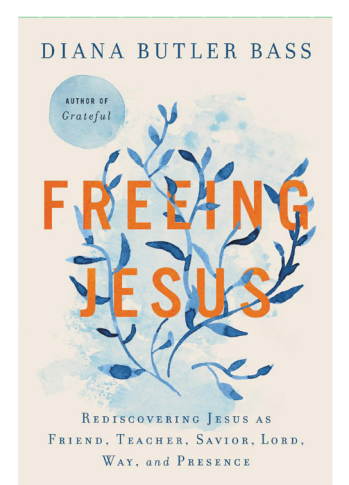


CBF Book Discussion Guide

by Rev. Christine Powell Kellett

Freeing Jesus: Rediscovering Jesus as Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way and Presence

By Diana Butler Bass



About the Author

As an award-winning author, popular speaker and inspiring preacher, Diana Butler Bass' passion is to share great ideas so that lives, as well as the world, can be changed. She does this through her art of storytelling, as well as through her humor, allowing others to be drawn in to experience first-hand what she is trying to convey.

Bass holds a Doctorate in Religious Studies from Duke University, has written 11 books, and has been published in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, and in many other media outlets. She has won many awards for her writings, including two Wilbur Awards for Best Nonfiction Book of the Year.

About the Book

In the book, *Freeing Jesus*, Bass takes us on her journey of how she has experienced Jesus differently through her many seasons of life. And even though she is still a Christian, she is not the same kind of Christian she used to be. *Freeing Jesus* explores the many facets of Jesus—ones that we experience, wrestle with and ultimately embrace along our own personal journeys.

In this book, Bass invites us to view Jesus outside the typical stereotypes or “boxes” in which modern Christianity tries to place Jesus, freeing us to have a true and more personal relationship with our Creator.

Rev. Christine Powell Kellett is a Baptist minister and freelance writer based in Greenville, S.C.



Book Discussion Questions

Liberate Jesus

- Have you ever asked the question: “Where are you, God?” If so, what were the circumstances that prompted this question?
- As a Christian, has there ever been a time when you felt betrayed by your faith/community so much so that you felt like leaving?
- Do you believe that Jesus can be fully known only inside a community of faith? Can Jesus be found in the world?
- What does it mean to “set Jesus free”?
- Stories are an important part of the Christian faith. We learn from other people’s stories, as well as the story of Jesus. What is your faith story? How have your experiences shaped your beliefs in who Jesus is?
- Do you have other Jesuses than the ones Bass mentions? How have these Jesus images shaped your faith journey?

Friend

- Bass talks about how the first story in the Bible is one about friendship in that God was lonely and needed a friend. God walks with Adam as a friend; then gives Adam a friend in the person of Eve. She refers to the three as “kindred soul mates” (p.10). How do you feel about this?
- Recall a childhood friend and express what made them special to you.
- “Friendship makes us different from the person we would be if we were alone” (p. 18). How are you different as a result of having certain people in your life? How are you different having Jesus in your life?
- Some forms of Christianity say that Jesus is never changing. But if we are invited to be in a friendship with Jesus, how can this be when friendships change us?

Teacher

- As a teacher, Jesus had rules. But do adults follow these rules in church and then play by a different set of rules everywhere else?
- If Jesus embodied the rule of love instead of a set of rules to be ticked off, what exactly does following this rule of love look like?
- How do you feel about what a parable really is and how we are often given a prescribed interpretation of what others (pastors, preachers, teachers) tell us they should mean?
- What do you think about not having to have the “right” answer when it comes to the interpretation of stories and scriptures?
- What do you believe the Bible to be (in relation to the ideas of inerrancy, infallibility, God- breathed)?
- When you think about the idea of a teacher—who are they and what do they do? Do you see this in Jesus? How has this affected your relationship with Jesus?

Savior

- Bass discusses the idea that Jesus as Savior, the one who takes away whatever is sinful and unclean, is not the type of Savior on which we should focus. There are many things from which people need to be saved—victimization, meaninglessness, suffering. These are the things that Jesus saves us from (pg. 76). What do you think about this classification of Jesus as Savior?
- As Bass discusses the idea of Savior Jesus, she talks about sin. What are your thoughts on original sin?
- When Bass talks about sin, she refers to it as a choice, not something we are born with. Do you agree with her?
- She also talks about how her home church believed that sin makes it impossible to reach toward God (pg. 90) and that God’s holiness would not allow any impurity to come into God’s presence; what is holy and what is sinful can never touch each other. What are your thoughts on this?

Lord

- When you hear the phrase “Jesus is Lord,” what comes to mind?
- Bass talks about the idea of our being slaves to God, our master. What do you think about this imagery of slave and master? Do you think it has a place in Christianity, especially when thinking about the relationship between God and God’s people?
- Jesus is Lord has many meanings. What meaning most speaks to you?
- Tell of times when you, like Bass, found yourself being the one who was being saved instead of saving the one whom you came to help. Did this experience change your views on what the concept of “missions” means?
- Can Jesus be both a radical and a divine head of an ordered church, as Bass talks about on page 153? What would this look like?

Way

- What does the scripture passage “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6) mean to you? Has your interpretation of this scripture changed over time?
- Bass describes the way, the truth and the life in interesting and possibly different ways than some Christians view them (pg.167). She describes them as relational words about how Jesus embodies a way of being in this world and how God is known in and through Jesus. Is this different from the way you have thought about Jesus? If it is, would it be something that you might be able to grasp in regard to your own faith?
- For many, the word “way” is viewed as a noun when referring to Jesus. But what if we viewed Jesus as the actual road, the journey? As Bass says, “There is no destination, only the enveloping presence of love” (pg. 188). How would this posture change the way in which Christianity is viewed and understood in the world?
- Has there ever been a time on your journey where complications, either through a situation you experienced or through something you discovered, challenged your certainty about your faith or some facet of it?

Presence

- How has the concept of the Trinity, God, Jesus, Spirit, formed and informed your faith journey throughout your life? Did one precede the other, or do you believe that all three beings/parts of the Trinity have always been present?
- In your experiences with God, in which form does God seem to be more immanent, more close by, or more transcendent or far off?
- Many debates have occurred over the feminine imagery of God. Bass talks about the feminine imagery of Jesus as well. Do you think there is a feminine side of Jesus?
- How have you recently opened your eyes and seen Jesus’ presence in the ordinary parts of your life or the world?
- Many Christians talk about the mystery of God and of Jesus. What about Jesus is a mystery to you?

Universal Jesus

- In what circles have you found yourself where it was evident that God was present?
- Memoir theology is the making of theology, as Bass describes on pg. 264. How has the text of your own life and experiences helped you understand the nature of Jesus?
- Who is the universal Jesus to you?



Further Reading

Other Books by the Author

Grateful: The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks

Grounded: Finding God in the World- A Spiritual Revolution

Christianity After Religion: The End of Church and the Birth of a New Spiritual Awakening

Further Readings

The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus by Amy-Jill Levine

Following Jesus: Finding Our Way Home in an Age of Anxiety by Henri Nouwen

An Altar in the World by Barbara Brown Taylor

Way of Love by Norman Wirzba