



The Last Week

Written by Marcus Borg & John Dominic Crossan
Published by SPCK
Available in Polmont Old Church Library.
(Also obtainable in Wesley Owen on special for
£5.99)

I picked up this book on Wesley Owen's Easter promotion. It is a day by day account of the events of Jesus' life in Holy Week. It is based on the gospel according to Mark and the relevant portions of scripture are quoted as required in an up-to-date translation. I found this a very comfortable format as you get Mark's text followed by the thoughts of the authors.

This book provides fresh perspectives on the old story. The authors aimed to throw light on the 'passion' (dedicated enthusiasm) that led to the events of Good Friday by retelling the gospel according to Mark in the light of Jewish High-priestly collaboration with Roman imperial control. They are thorough scholars and make the history, economic and political situation is explored fully. They offer the theology in a straightforward manner, helping us to understand the culture and Jesus' motivation. A number of their ideas (for example the significance of the procession on Palm Sunday and the cleansing of the temple) have given the events of the story a deeper resonance in my mind now.

It is clear that the authors are well-versed in Biblical studies and that they are passionate about Jesus. They seek to bring the historical persona of Jesus to life with a great degree of success.

The Last Week is primarily for self-study, but there are group study questions at the end and the authors suggest eight sessions – one for each chapter taking us from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. You can enjoy it as a book to read – but it does make you think (always a good thing!) and you will enjoy pondering the events and the ideas they suggest between chapters.

This book comes recommended for a serious read. It is particularly suited to the Season of Lent and Easter, but with the focus on Jesus' words, life and actions would be appropriate for any time of year.

Tracey O'Brien

What our 'Strokes' reveal about us


A colleague tells of a hearing a pastor give a very meaningful illustration – taken from Chinese kung fu comics – of what it means to be Christlike. In these stories, the hero and his opponent usually engage in a duel, and in only a few kung fu strokes (as depicted in the comics), the reader can easily identify which martial arts school each character is from. Not only that, but as the story unfolds, the skills of each hero/heroine reflect on whether or not the master who taught him or her was skilful.

He said the pastor then asked whether people would be able to identify us as followers of Jesus Christ, when we make a few 'strokes'. He explained that the 'strokes' we make could be in the manner in which we speak, in how we conduct our business affairs, in how we relate to family members, or in how we conduct ourselves in public. It makes one wonder, do our 'strokes' identify us as disciples of Christ, or do they bring dishonour to His name?

Jesus gave His disciples this commandment:
"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this, all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13: 34-35)

As my colleague went on to say, the skill we ought to display is the way we show our love to one another. Our behaviour, speech and attitude will either reflect our love, care and concern, or bitterness and selfishness. May we, as followers of Christ, be more Christlike in the way we love.

Contributed by Lyn McQuaker



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