

**SMALL
GROUP
GUIDES**
from HarperOne

Freeing Jesus

REDISCOVERING JESUS
AS FRIEND, TEACHER, SAVIOR, LORD,
WAY, *and* PRESENCE



DIANA BUTLER BASS

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INTRODUCTION

1. “Who is Jesus, really?” asks Diana Butler Bass (p. xviii). How would you answer this simple yet complex question?
2. The title of the book is *Freeing Jesus*, and the book opens with a story of Diana hearing what she felt was the voice of Jesus asking to be sprung from the cathedral she was in. What do you think Jesus needs to be freed from?
3. Bass lays out three different terms for understanding Jesus: “Jesus of history,” “Christ of faith,” and “Jesus of experience” (pp. xviii–xx). Which one are you more familiar with? Why?
4. What has been your understanding of Jesus throughout your life? How have you seen that change over the years?

CHAPTER 1: FRIEND

1. Bass reflects on the nature of friendship in this chapter. What stands out to you about those reflections? What did you learn?
2. “Jesus calls us friends. God reaches toward us, not as a fearsome master or judge, but a friend, beckoning us to reach back” (p. 16). Do you view Jesus as a friend of yours? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 2: TEACHER

1. “Of the ninety or so times Jesus is addressed directly in the New Testament, roughly sixty refer to him as ‘teacher,’ ‘rabbi,’ ‘great one,’ or ‘master’” (p. 29). According to Bass, what kind of teacher is Jesus?
2. Which of the teachings of Jesus is most compelling or attractive to you? Which teaching is most challenging or frustrating? Why?

CHAPTER 3: SAVIOR

1. How does your faith community talk about Jesus as “savior”? How have you understood Jesus’s role as “savior”?
2. “The word ‘salvation’ comes from the Latin *salvus*, which originally referred to being made whole, uninjured, safe, or in good health. *Salvus* was not about being taken out of this life; it was about this life being healed” (p. 76). How does this understanding of “salvation” square with your understanding of Jesus as “savior”?

CHAPTER 4: LORD

1. Prior to reading this chapter, when you thought of Jesus as “Lord,” what words, images, and phrases came to mind? Why?

2. What did you learn about the nature of the “lordship” of Jesus in this chapter (p. 120)?

CHAPTER 5: WAY

1. “[Jesus] not only taught a way inviting the curious to follow him, but he said *he* was the way” (p. 165). According to Bass, what does this mean? Do you think of Jesus as “the way”? Why or why not?
2. Bass claims, “Being a Christian is about finding and getting found by Jesus” (p. 170). Do you agree with this? Regardless, describe your journey of “finding and getting found by Jesus.”

CHAPTER 6: PRESENCE

1. Where do you sense the presence of Jesus most clearly? In worship? In Scripture? In study? In community? In service? In creation? In silence? Elsewhere? Why?
2. Bass recounts a question from her daughter: “Mama, where is God? Where does Jesus live?” (p. 228). How does reading this chapter help you answer that question?

CONCLUSION: THE UNIVERSAL JESUS

1. “We know Jesus through our experience” (p. 264).
What has been your past experience with Jesus? What do you hope your future experience with Jesus will be like?
2. In your opinion, where does Jesus most need to be freed? Why?
3. After reading this book, how would you look back over your life and pinpoint the ways you’ve encountered Jesus? Are there any you need to let go of? Hold on to? Find anew?