

The remarkable German woman who defied the Gestapo and built a ministry of repentance out of the ashes of WW2

‘I Found the Key to the Heart of God’

by M Basilea Schlink (2023)

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Sisters of Mary with Mother Basilea in 1971

Klara Schlink aged 17



Let me introduce you to a book that was first published 50 years ago. At the time Basilea Schlink was a 70-year-old lady. Her remarkable story has resonated with many over the years.

Now a new generation can read the story of this amazing woman who grew up in pre-World War 2 Germany and with her close friend, Erika Madauss, went on to birth an international ministry. The ‘Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary’ is still based in Darmstadt, Germany today. ‘I Found the Key to the Heart of God’ is a completely new edition of the original classic, freshly translated from the original German, and attractively presented in hardback.

The first part of the book describes life growing up in Germany from before the beginning of World War 1, and on through the rise of the Nazis and the effect of World War 2. Having come to faith in Christ during a time of sickness, Basilea longed to share her faith with others. She did this through serving as a Darmstadt City Mission youth worker, as a Bible College lecturer, and then working with the Germany Student Christian Movement.



Klara was a student in 1932

The German Student Christian Movement went through a difficult time in the 1930's as they debated whether to comply and implement the Aryan Paragraph concerning Jews. Basilea argued for its rejection which meant that Jews were still welcome at their activities. The movement voted and agreed with her view. Twice she was reported to the Gestapo and interrogated for hours because of her decision to follow Jesus.

Out of those girls' Bible classes came a real revival of repentance, joy, brokenness and living for God

This book is not simply recounting her story. It is a challenge to readers to go deeper with God. There are many quotes from Basilea's diaries. Consider this quote from 25 July, 1925:

"With all my heart I thank you Lord Jesus, for the amazing privilege of being your child ... I want to spend my life in loving you. And when I am not fully abiding to you, bring me back through humbling experiences."

While her years were spent in Christian activity, her longing was to see more of God in her life and those she was in contact with. A friendship with Erika Madauss became a lifetime commitment to working in the Gospel together.



Dr Klara Schlink, 1940



Mother Basilea in 1974

In 1935 the two of them moved back to Darmstadt. Based on the top floor of her parents' house, they started Bible studies for young women. Their foundation text was:

“He would say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’” (*Matthew 3:2, NKJV*).

The two friends wanted to trust God to provide their every need. They pressed on, even though all their meetings were entirely voluntary and produced no income. They learned to live by faith, even though they also experienced poverty.

Less than a year after starting the meetings, Basilea wrote in her journal on 29 June 1936:

“May the future be as God wills for our ministry. That the ministry will materialise we know. But what crushing blows it takes! Christ must be glorified in every situation. May God enable us.”

They pressed on. On the night of 11 September, 1944, RAF bombers dropped their deadly charges over Darmstadt, and left thousands in the town dead or homeless. Basilea and Erika went in search of “their girls”.

The work went on and out of those girls' Bible classes came revival, a real revival of repentance, joy, brokenness and living for God. It was the beginning of a movement that in time became 'The Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary'. Basilea, or Mother Basilea as the new young sisters asked if they could call her, shares her vision:

"My vision was a life lived in love with Jesus, leading us to forgive and love one another, and to share his path of poverty and lowliness as disciples of the Cross".

Many times, they had to seek the Lord for the way forward. But the work grew and blossomed. By faith they built a beautiful estate outside Darmstadt called Kanaan, with a chapel where a repentance service takes place daily at 3pm, the hour Christ died.

Mother Basilea experienced trials and tribulations as she sought to follow the Lord's will for her life, but she came to see that sharing in Christ's sufferings ([Philippians 3:10](#), [2 Timothy 2:10](#), [Colossians 1:24](#)) was a key to the heart of God.

When Lorna and I were in Israel in 2000, we were approached by the Evangelical Sisterhood of Mary and asked if we would administrate a 'repentance' conference for them in Jerusalem the following year. As we worked with them for three months, we truly found they live the life that this book talks about. May you similarly be blessed as you read it.



Gordon, along with his wife Lorna, is part of the leadership team of Revelation TV, a 24/7 Christian television station that broadcasts in the UK on Sky 581 and Freesat TV 692, and throughout the world via the Roku Box and Apple TV. Gordon's passion is writing and he is the author of eight books.

Gordon Pettie and his wife Lorna

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