



Facing the Lion: Memoirs of a Young Girl in Nazi Europe

Simone Arnold Liebster

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Simone Arnold is an ordinary French schoolgirl: spirited and stubborn. Then the Nazis march in, demanding complete conformity. Friends become enemies, teachers spout Nazi propaganda, and school officials recruit for the Hitler Youth. Simone's family refuses to hail Hitler as Germany's savior. They are Jehovah's Witnesses, and they reject Nazi racism and violence. The Nazi Lion makes them pay the price.

Facing the Lion: Memoirs of a Young Girl in Nazi Europe Details

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From Reader Review Facing the Lion: Memoirs of a Young Girl in Nazi Europe for online ebook

Sharanja says

This book is not the best book I've ever read, but I found it to be uplifting still. 'Facing the Lion' is the real life story of Simone Arnold, a young Jehovah's Witness, as she faces terror and discrimination under the Nazi Regime in WWII. Arnold's story lets us know of the suffering that went on outside of the camps, and what other Nazi banned groups had to go through to survive. I found little Simone to be brave and an intelligent young girl. Her determination to succeed is what kept the book so interesting.

bookyeti says

Facing The Lion: Memoirs of a Young Girl in Nazi Europe is an autobiography written in the voice of a young girl, Simone Arnold. Growing up in Alsace (a location on the French/German border), Simone is an astute and happy child surrounded by a close-knit and loving family. In time, her parents become Jehovah's Witnesses and Simone too makes the personal decision to embrace the faith with a fiery zeal and enduring fervor beyond her years, that would make any parent swell with pride. However, WWII is just around the corner, and trouble strikes when the Nazis annex the bordering French territory of Alsace, the home of the Arnold family. The Bibelforscher (Jehovah's Witnesses or "Bible Students" as they were known then) in all of Nazi Europe are quickly put under ban.

Being conscientious objectors in line with the scriptures' admonition "You must not murder", the steadfast Bible Students did not support the war effort in any way whatsoever. They refused to "Heil Hitler". As a result of their bible-based beliefs and their neutral standing, thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses were sent to concentration camps to suffer cruelly at the hands of the Nazi regime. Even though the Bibelforscher were given the opportunity to be released if they "simply" renounced their faith by signing a legal document, these ones remained steadfast and unmovable. Because of their unbreakable allegiance to God alone, and not the state, they became targets of the Nazis' rage and even their fellow citizens. However, their beliefs and firm reliance on Jehovah God helped these students of the Bible endure the oppression of the camps, some even to the point of death.

As unwavering Bibelforscher, the Arnold family was not immune to such horrors of the war machine. Soon after the war's outset, Simone's father is arrested and is taken away to the Dachau concentration camp and thereafter the infamous Mauthausen. Shortly after Simone is extradited to a strict Nazi reform school, her mother and aunt are also deported to the Schirmeck and Gaggenau camps.

Facing The Lion is full of heart-rending experiences as Simone recounts physical and mental abuse at the reform school by those who outwardly and secretly conspired to break her spirit. Yet, Simone maintains her strong faith amidst such persecution, and throughout maintains her spiritual and moral conviction. Excerpts from personal letters, documents, photographs of family and detailed drawings by the author herself serve to personalize the events, making for a poignant vicarious experience.

Inspiring, encouraging...this moving life story of a courageous and steadfast young girl has added to my respect and admiration of my rich spiritual heritage; and to all those, including Simone and her family, who struggled courageously to endure man's inhumanity to man.

Paloma Maldonado says

This book told the story of a young girl who was a Jehovah Witness. It tells you that the Jewish people weren't the only ones who suffered during WWII. After having her childhood taken from her Simone(Maria) was sent to live in a home for "dilinquent" children. Simone(Maria) wasn't a diliquent though, she just stood strong and wouldn't betray her values. Even after four years of gruesome hard labor and back breaking tasks she wouldn't bend. This book taught me that if stand strong for what you believe in nothing can tear you down and you'll make it to that "finish line". This book was one of the very best books I have ever read and I recommend that you should read this book.

Asha Greye says

When I first picked up this book, during my very first semester of university, I had not yet made contact with Jehovah's Witnesses and adopted the beliefs as my own. No rather I read this is as a sheltered globally illiterate American high school graduate, who did not know that others besides Jews suffered during the Holocaust. I was enthralled from the beginning to the end by the vivid descriptions of life in pre-war Alsace-Lorraine, a region in the crossroads of both France and Germany, her parents religious conversion, and their suffering for the simple "crime" of standing up for their beliefs, persecuted not only by government but also shunned by family and friends alike. A well behaved child with good law abiding Christian parents kicked out of public school and sent to a youth detention center, because she refused to bow down and worship a grown man with an obvious inferiority complex, who ever heard of such a thing? I was in awe at how nothing more than Ms. Simone Arnold's unwavering religious faith kept her going throughout her entire ordeal. This book is truly amazing.

Jeanette says

I agree, every JW should read. Such courage. An example to follow!

Nicole says

An often overlooked fact, Jehovah's Witnesses suffered great persecution at the hands of the Nazis due to their firm stand against Hitler. This book tells the poignant experiences of a young Jehovah's Witness who stayed true to her faith through many trials and hardships. I highly recommend it to persons of all faiths, but especially so to Jehovah's Witnesses as it is an encouraging and faith strengthening read.

Sarah says

"I remembered that it was a privilege to stand as a Witness of Jehovah."

Like many people that have read this book - that one sentence blew me away.

As one of Jehovah's Witnesses I started reading this book at first as nothing more than an interest in our history. However, it wasn't long before I realised that no matter what (if any) faith you are of, this girl's courage and faith is nothing short of inspiring. To be such a young age and to survive being ripped from the love of your family, be told time and again that your God is pointless and that everything you ever believed in is a lie, would be inspiring enough. But Simone proved time and again (to herself and then to others) that what she believed was right and that the God she had such strong faith in was indeed a mighty tower for her to find strength in. And while I was reading about her faith I thought about the amazing job that her parents had done in raising her in the faith. How many parents can say that if they were to face the same test they know that their children would stand firm?

At many times I teared up over what this child must have been feeling, and yet there are times when I also cheered at her strength of character.

This may be the story of a Witness of Jehovah, yet it is a story for all walks of faith and life.

I rank this above the Anne Frank diary - that's how awesome it is!

Cherilyn says

Autobiography of a sister... so far it's a great read and really encouraging!

Miriam Pereira says

The book Facing The Lion by Simone Arnold Liebster was one of my favorite books. I've read a book about the holocaust but there most about Jews, but this one shows how it wasn't just Jews that were targeted. It was a great auto- biography of who a girl stood up for what she believed in even though it would cost her own life.

Simone made you feel what she was feeling and kind of feel what she was going through. We may never go through such things but she makes you feel all the pain she went through.

It's about a girl who lived in France in the time that Adolph Hitler took over. Her family were bible students (Jehovah's Witnesses), they had so much love for the bible. They never lied because they believe, so imagine how hard it was keeping away from the soldiers that would go to their house looking to take all their watchtowers, and bibles.

Simone wouldn't participate in school when they would hail Hitler. She wouldn't also salute the flag. Her father was arrested because they caught him with a bible, he was a prisoner. Even though they never gave up on their beliefs. Which makes this book so inspirational for everyone.

Later on Simone was separated from her mother also, and she had no one else left. She was later put in an all girls school, it was kind of like prison too. Simone faced really hard times, and under pressure but she always kept her faith strong.

I actually met a woman who knew Simone and we had a video chat with her. It was hard to understand her cause she mostly spoke all English we had a translator but she was so inspiring. I would definitely recommend every to read this book. It's long but you won't regret it one bit.

Michele Vaca says

We were able to Skype the author who is a Holocaust survivor, amazing story!

Christopher J. says

This book was one of the few books that I would say "touched" me. The emotion with which Liebster conveys her experiences coupled with the control she has over the story makes for a true masterpiece. Liebster's memoir may not be the most traumatic of Holocaust survivor stories. Yet it is one of the most compelling. Torn from the arms of her mother and father, both of whom are shipped to concentration camps, Liebster is forced to attend a reform school to remove her dangerous religious convictions. The courage she portrays in maintaining her Jehovah's Witness faith is nothing short of amazing. One thing I enjoyed about this memoir is that it can be appreciated by both Witnesses and non-Witnesses. As a Jehovah's Witness I found the book faith strengthening and in some odd ways relatable. Non-Witness readers should still read the book. They will be impressed with Liebster's intrepidity and integrity. She faced "the Lion"-- the Jehovah's Witness code name for Nazi forces-- at the age of twelve years old with more integrity than most adults of that era. It is nothing short of a fantastic read.

Dawn says

Simone Arnold endured a childhood deranged by Nazi terror in 1940's Europe. Her experiences are difficult to read because they expose this world's shocking capacity for wickedness. Yet, Simone heroically maintained her integrity in the face of brutal war-time tyranny.

As a child of only 11-14 years, Simone was expelled from school, torn from her parents, and enslaved in a Nazi "rehabilitation" institution. Time and again she was taunted and abused for her religious convictions as a Bible Student. I appreciate her candor in relating those painful memories. Her memoir emphasizes the hopefulness, familial love, and faith in her God, Jehovah, that sustained her through those cruel years.

Ultimately, Simone and her parents set an example of Godly devotion that defeats the "Lion" of hatred and injustice.

I recommend Simone's account for readers in 8th grade and above (ages 13+).

Brandon Briscoe says

This book has inspired me to strengthen my resolve to serve Jehovah more fully. If this young girl can do it amid the Nazi Lion, then I can do it.

Kassandra says

I loved this book so much. To see a person that young with such faith is amazing.

I look up to her, and reading about her and her strength to stand up for what she believes in is

AWESOME!!!!!!! Being one of Jehovah's Witnesses I understand what it's like to go through persecution, granted it's not that extreme, but when you read about something like this, you as a person really appreciate and look up to those who have been one for a long time and have that faith until the day they die. The way Simone puts everything is so wonderful, it lets people see how hard those times were, and that Jews weren't the only ones who faced persecutions.

Maureen says

After recently reading about the people in Concentration Camps with the "pink triangle" labels I was curious about other minority groups persecuted and sent to Concentration camps under the Nazi regime. This book is about the 'purple triangle' people...Jehovah's Witnesses. Specifically, this is the autobiography of Simone who is 11 and taken away from her parents and put into a 'reform' school where she is severely abused. She could have avoided going there in the first place if she had said 'heil Hitler' at her school but she refused. Both her parents were both put into concentration camps and she had little likelihood of ever seeing them alive again. I especially liked the honesty and the way she expressed her feelings, even after meeting her parents again who were shells of themselves. Especially her father who was beaten so severely in Auschwitz that he became deaf. He was depressed and filled with anxiety and told of the horrible things the Nazis did to him in addition to being beaten up. They asked him to simply say he wouldn't be a Jehovah's witness again and they would let him out of the concentration camp but he refused. So the Nazis locked him in a room for 6 months with his arms in cages of Mosquitos all day trying to infect him with malaria. Although Simone never was in a camp, her 'reform school' was extremely abusive and I was able to learn a lot about what her parents and relatives went through, Simone ended up marrying a Jewish man who had survived a concentration camp.
