
Westminster Abbey

Learning



Modern Martyrs: Esther John

Born: 14th October 1929

Died: 2nd February 1960

Occupation: Nurse/teacher

Biography

Esther John was born in India and her name was Qamar Zia.

When her family moved into the new state of Pakistan, she spoke to a Christian missionary who gave her a copy of the New Testament and then she converted to Christianity. As she was scared her family would make her marry a Muslim man, she ran away and changed her name to Esther John. She worked at an orphanage and then moved to live in a mission hospital. She travelled around local villages on her bicycle and taught women how to read while working with them in the cotton fields.

Esther John was murdered in her house. A memorial chapel was built for her in the grounds of the hospital where she lived.

Activities

Esther John said that it was the 53rd chapter of Isaiah that made her want to convert from Islam to Christianity.

“Who was believed what we have heard?
And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”
(Isaiah 53:1)

While Esther John became a Christian, the rest of her family were upset that she was no longer a Muslim. Discuss this Bible passage with a partner. How do you think she felt? How do you think her family felt?

In the Bible, Jesus talks about how important it is to be true to yourself:
“For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?”
(Mark 8:36)

Discuss this Bible passage with a partner. What sacrifices do people make during their lives?

Write a paragraph about what people can learn from the behaviour and teachings of Esther John.



For teachers:

We recommend you read our "[Introducing Modern Martyrs: primary teachers' guide](#)" before using this activity sheet.

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