

How Harper Lee Used the Bible to Guide Her Writing

Though most recognize Nelle Harper Lee's name from her writing, those in Monroeville, Alabama, knew her by her quiet faith.

As many reflect on Lee's death Friday, they also examine her Christian foundations.

From the prophetically-titled *Go Set a Watchman* to the inspirational social advocacy of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lee's faith was always present in her works.

"That's what she loved – the elegance of the language of the King James Version," said historian Wayne Flynt, a longtime friend of Lee and also a Baptist minister. "She grew up in a Bible-reading family. She was imprinted with it as a child."

Flynt continued: "*Go Set a Watchman* means, 'Somebody needs to be the moral compass of this town.' Isaiah was a prophet. God had set him as a watchman over Israel. It's really God speaking to the Hebrews, saying what you need to do is set a watchman, to set you straight, to keep you on the right path. What more elegant title could there be?"

Indeed, even secular sources like CNN recognize the biblical precedent present in her words.

"Maybe Jesus is telling them to recapture the idealism they have lost with adulthood. Don't many of us grow older and just accept the injustice, the poverty, the hurting people, the oppression and sin around us as the way it is'?" CNN's Matt Litton writes.

Some, like leaders in the United Methodist Church, where Lee was a member for decades, say her writing the evidence of her

scriptural knowledge. Lee even used of her *TKAM* royalties to build part of her local church.

“Nelle Harper is very well read in the Bible,” said Hare, top executive of the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women. “Years ago, she autographed a copy of ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’ for me, and quoted Scripture in the personalized autograph.”

A lifelong Methodist, Lee was brought up in an era when biblical knowledge was the foundation of Southern literature, ‘s Greg Garrison reports.

May her faith and passion for Scripture live on in her legacy.