



READING GUIDE

November, 2025

Australian Gospel

Lech Blaine

In short

A dark comedy about the tangled fates of two couples and the children trapped between them from one of Australia's most brilliant writers.



Synopsis

Michael and Mary Shelley are Christian fanatics who loathe their fellow Australians – especially their ‘reckless indulgence of alcohol and obsession with idiotic ball sports’.

Lenore and Tom Blaine are working-class Queensland publicans raising a large family in a raucous, loving, sports-obsessed home.

There's just one problem. Lenore and Tom are foster parents to three of Michael and Mary's children, who were removed from the Shelleys as infants. And the Shelleys are prepared to do anything to get them back. Anything.

Australian Gospel is the true story of Lech Blaine's family, a stranger-than-fiction tale that is heartbreaking, hilarious and altogether astonishing.

Discussion points

1. Is Blaine even-handed in his treatment of the Blaines and the Shelleys? Should he be?
2. Do Michael's opinions about Australia and Australians ever ring true?
3. What else is *Australian Gospel* saying about Australia?
4. How does Blaine manage to imbue humour into this story? Is it OK to be humorous about these events? Does it detract from the emotional impact of the story or add to it?