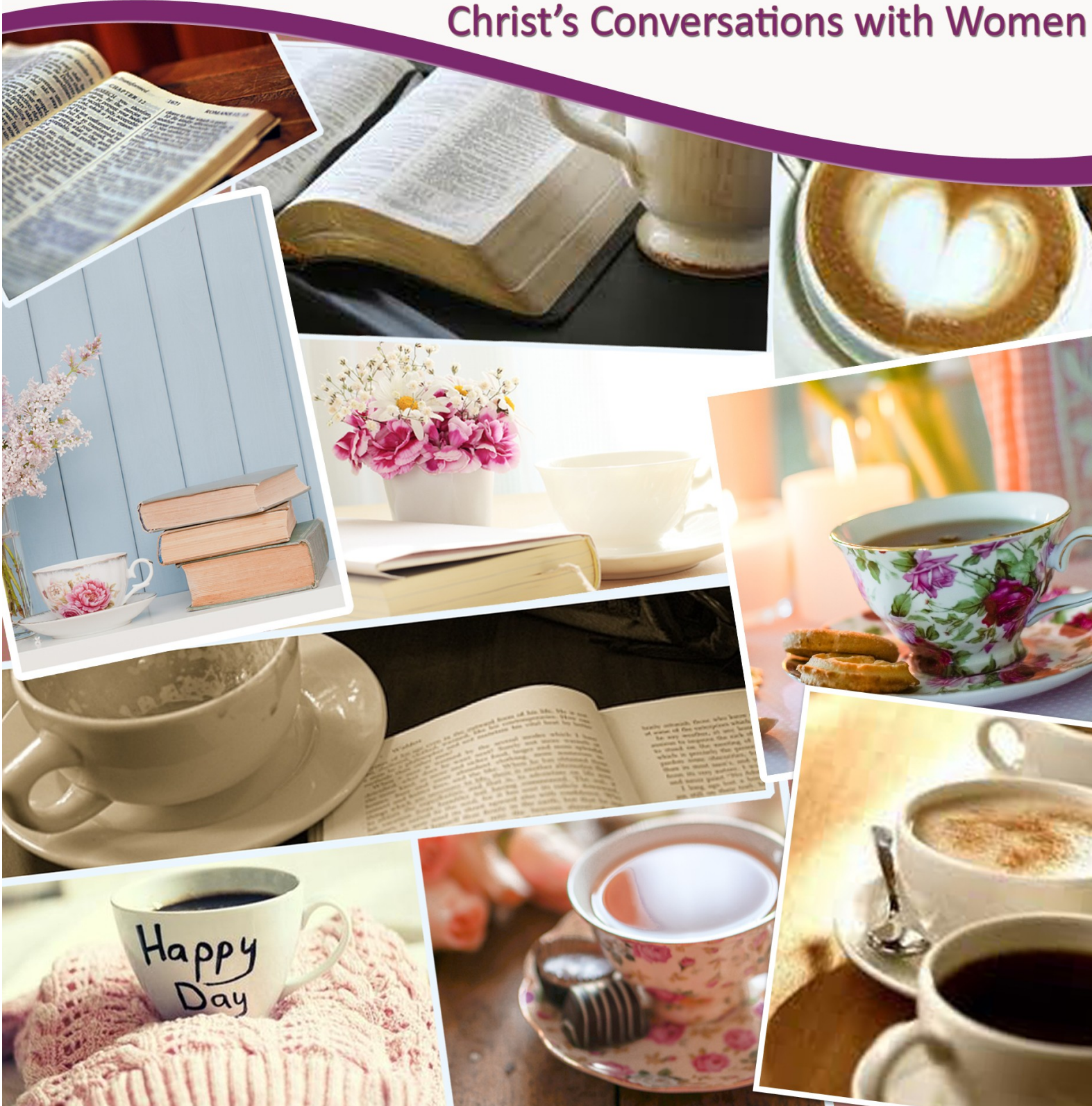
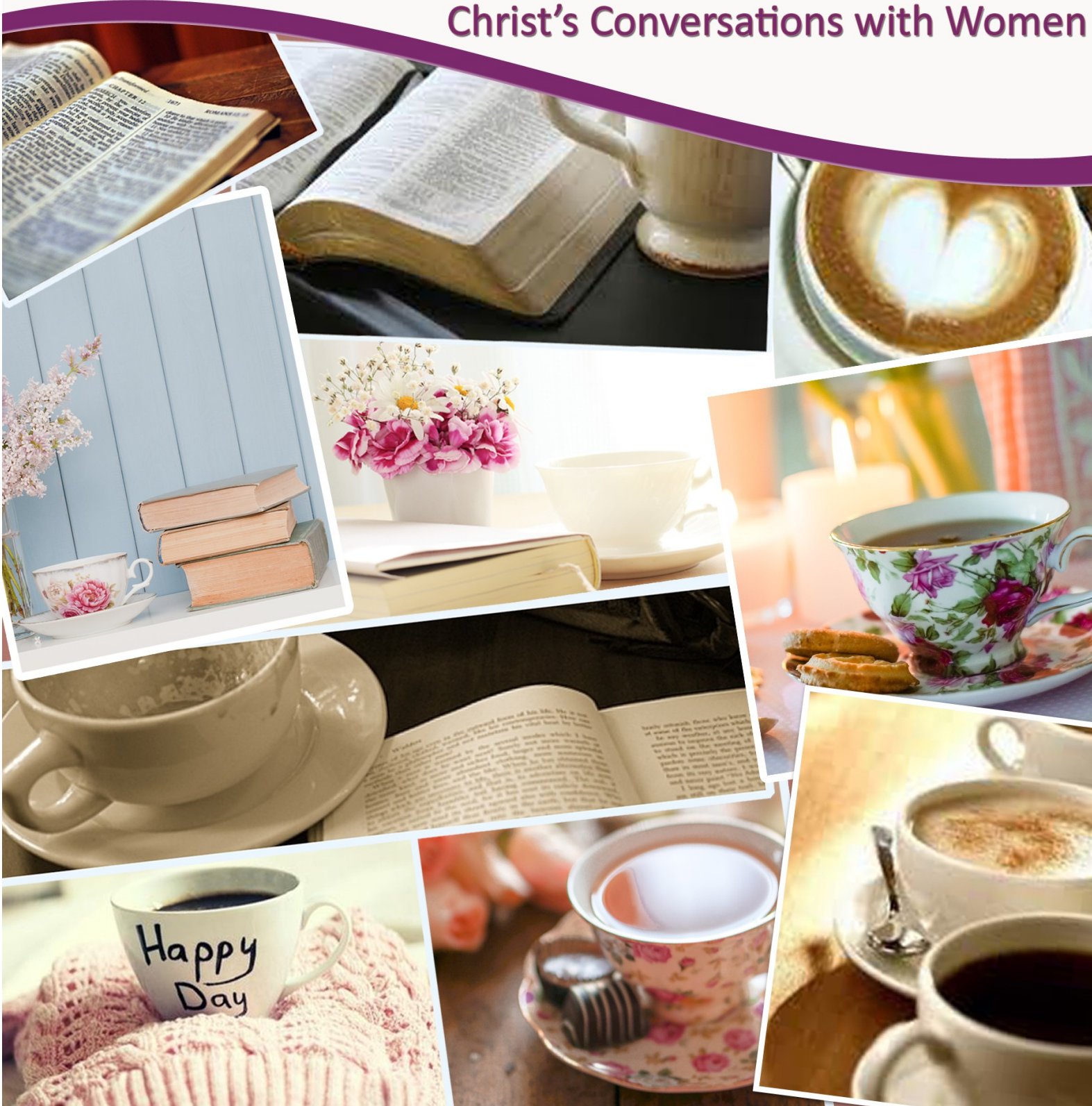


Christ's Conversations with Women



A collage of images related to coffee, tea, and books, including a Bible, a heart-shaped latte, a stack of books, a cup of tea, a cup of coffee, a cup of tea with a candle, a cup of coffee with a book, a cup of coffee with a sweater, a cup of coffee with a cookie, and a cup of coffee with a spoon.

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Welcome to WOW Groups

WOW stands for Women of the Word. WOW groups will meet four times a year for three years, and study:

- ♡ “Women of the Savior Jesus: Christ’s Conversations with Women”—2016
- ♡ “Women of the Holy Spirit: A Window into Biblical Womanhood”—2017
- ♡ “Women of the One True God: A Door into Titus 2:3-5”—2018

This booklet, “Women of the Savior Jesus” holds the material for the first year of three years. We will hear and learn from what Christ says in His conversations with women, in an environment created for the goal of forming relationships where we are held accountable and hold one another accountable.

You may have studied some of these topics previously, in the 2012-2015 Titus 2 Groups. That’s excellent! The more intimately familiar we are with God’s will for us as women, the better! In the 2016-2018 WOW Groups, the material will not change much, but we hope to have new and smaller groups. We hope that each group holds some women already acquainted with and disciplined by what we are studying from God’s Word, who are able to share what they’ve learned and offer hopeful encouragement.

Christ’s parting command to us was to make disciples, and in God’s design for the church, women are called to relationships that fulfill that purpose (Titus 2:1-5). Will you, in obedience to Jesus and deliberate love for your sisters, become part of a WOW group that meets four times a year for three years? Thank you for your part in this selfless opportunity to help, encourage, and strengthen other women for the glory of God.

1. Each group will meet four times a year for three years. Be faithful.
2. Prepare before each meeting! Please complete the studies of various conversations Christ held with women, and preview the week’s discussion questions. While there are many wonderful version of the Bible, we have used the ESV, and it will help you to fill in blanks if you have that version. If you don’t have it, you might want to look for the free ESV app.
3. Please, do not monopolize your WOW group with excessive speech or with silence. Let each person have chances to contribute. Here’s a suggestion— if you like to talk, make yourself quieter so those who are more comfortable listening will be able to speak up. If you like to listen, ask God to help you step out of your comfort zone and know when it’s time for you to share. You are needed, whether you say a lot or a little.
4. Be aware of time as you talk about the question you’d like to discuss, so that each group member has an opportunity to raise the question they most want to see addressed.
5. Each time you meet, please allow the prayer request questions to guide you to request accountability. There’s space to write down the requests of those in your gathering, to help you remember other’s prayer needs. Set aside your own special time each week to pray for the women in your group. Welcome accountability and be available for accountability.

Women of the Savior Jesus

Christ's Conversations with Women

By Ruth Froese

Index

Confess Your Sin (I know you intimately)	page 4
Be Forgiven (I died for your sins)	page 10
Persist in Faith (I will reward you)	page 16
Humbly Serve (I give you a role and responsibilities)	page 22

Have you ever pondered, "What does Jesus specifically say about biblical womanhood?" At first glance, it appears He doesn't really say much about us. But a study of the conversations he held with women while He walked here on earth tells a different story. As we look together at Christ's conversations with women, we'll clearly see His intention for us and how we can live as biblical Women of the Word.

February, 2016

1. Confess Your Sin



John 4:1-42 ~ Sam

Perhaps you've heard the nickname with which the woman of this passage is often dubbed—"The Woman at the Well." For our purposes, let's give her a real name, Sam.

What a visit to the well for Sam! She probably hadn't dreamt of such a conversation, but Jesus had, and He carefully orchestrated events to set up their time together. We learn from John 4:3-4 that while travelling from Judea to Galilee, Jesus "*had to pass through Samaria*." Typically, Jews travelling from Judea to Galilee took the path through Perea in order to avoid Samaria (since the Jews hated the Samaritans), thus, "*had to*" refers to Jesus' intention.

From John 4:7, who initiates the conversation? _____ Not only does Jesus travel out of His way to meet Sam, but He also initiates the relationship. Likewise, He goes out of His way to reveal Himself and initiate relationship with you. Luke 19:10 says that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. If you know Jesus personally, it's because He initiated a relationship with you. Would you take a moment to thank Him right now?

With our Bibles open to John 4, let's follow the interaction between Jesus and Sam:

JESUS:

Jesus starts the conversation by turning Sam's thoughts toward Him (John 4:7). What does He ask her for? _____ Ultimately, He wants to talk with her about what He can give her—living water to quench her thirst and satisfy her desires forever. If Sam drinks it, that water will become in her a spring welling up to eternal life. But Sam has a few other topics on her mind, and Jesus lets her raise them.

SAM:

To uncover what is on Sam's mind, look up John 4:9 and fill in the blanks: "*How is it that you, a _____, ask for a drink from me, a _____ of _____?*" Off the bat, Sam raises these issues:

- ♥ Gender: Obviously there is some type of issue with a man striking up conversation with a woman.
- ♥ Cultural and racial: Jesus is of the nation Israel—purely Jewish, while Sam is Samaritan—half-Jew, half-Gentile.

JESUS:

In John 4:10, does Jesus directly answer Sam's question? _____ What does He offer her?

From John 7:38-39, what is Jesus talking about when He offers an unending supply of living water to the woman at the well? _____

SAM:

Sam responds by basically asking Jesus who He thinks He is, then kicks up some argument from a centuries-old family feud that makes the Hatfields and McCoys look like puppies. Please read John 4:12 and fill in the following blanks. "*Are you _____ than our father Jacob? He gave _____ the well.*" Here's how D.A. Carson describes the history of the Samaritans:

After the Assyrians captured Samaria [the capital of the Northern kingdom of Israel] in 722–21 BC, they deported all the Israelites of substance and settled the land with foreigners, who intermarried with the surviving Israelites and adhered to some form of their ancient religion (2 Kings 17–18). After the exile [of the Southern kingdom in Babylon], Jews,



"I know you intimately"

returning to their homeland . . . viewed the Samaritans not only as the children of political rebels but as racial half-breeds whose religion was tainted by various unacceptable elements [and did not allow them to share in rebuilding of or worship at the Jerusalem temple]. . . . About 400 BC the Samaritans erected a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. (D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 216).

You get the picture. After over 700 years, the hostility of this feud is deeply ingrained in who Sam is. Do you suppose she expected Jesus to take the bait and argue with her?

JESUS:

Notice how Jesus ignores the bait and responds with hope, John 4:13-14: *Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.*

SAM:

Read John 4:15. Sam thinks on a physical plane, doesn't she? She has no idea yet who she is talking to. But she'd like an easier life, without the trek to the well every day. You can also hear a bit of rejection in her voice, this woman who visits the well alone. Perhaps she chose to draw water alone because the other women of Samaria gave her a hard time, or possibly she had been officially forced to draw water alone, given her adulterous lifestyle. But Sam is not the first to suffer rejection by other women. In Genesis 21, we read of another woman in desperate need. Read Genesis 21:19. What does God provide for Hagar in her great need? _____

From Genesis 21:9-15, why was Hagar in need? _____

Did you notice Sarah's part in Hagar's need (Genesis 21:10)? Hagar had been rejected by Sarah, and forced into the parching desert. There, God provided the water she desperately needed. Both Sam and Hagar had been rejected, and God offered water.

JESUS:

Jesus ignores any self-pity that Sam raises. Notice that He does not speak soothing words to make her feel better. He needs to help her face her sin in order for the living water to become available to her. In John 4:16, Jesus brings her face-to-face with her sin, gently forcing her to face its reality.

SAM:

Sam has no option but to admit her sin of adultery (John 4:17).

JESUS:

Jesus brings her to face her sin to an even deeper degree (John 4:18).

SAM:

She's not done. In John 4:20, with what type of argument does she try to hook Jesus? _____

In the presence of the One she will be worshiping for eternity, Sam tries to bait Jesus into a worship-location war! If it wasn't so like us, it would be laughable.

JESUS:

He removes the obstacle. Speaking straight to Sam's heart, He explains that external aspects of worship, such as location, will not even be a thought when she truly worships the Father.

An amazing thing happens next. Perhaps Sam recalls a teacher's voice from her Sunday School days, before she'd fallen so deeply into her sin. Wherever it comes from, her memory is jogged, and she blurts out a great, most astounding teaching of the Old Testament. She says, "These things you're



telling me about worshipping God, well sir, someone is coming from God who is going to tell them to us. He will be the Messiah.”

With that, the back-and-forth interaction is over. Just like us, when we stop our arguing, when we finally quit raising issues, and when we finally fix our eyes on Jesus for forgiveness of our sins.

Tenderly, with amazing restraint for this surely was what Jesus had been longing to say that entire thirst-inducing hot afternoon, He reveals His identity. “I who speak to you am He.”

Sam responds to Jesus exactly as you and I need to respond. We gain insight into her thinking in John 4:28-29 & 39, from what she said to the people of her town. Rather than defending herself or raising yet another excuse, how did Sam respond to the way Jesus focused on her own sin? _____

Her testimony rang with open admission of her sin, and with how Jesus had confronted her with it.

When we meet Jesus, wherever and however He orchestrates it, He confronts us in our sin and offers healing and life. This is an important lesson. No woman can receive the gospel without recognizing and repenting of her sin. Rather than defending ourselves when someone points out our sin, Sam teaches us to embrace brokenness, confess our sin freely, and be excited about the Messiah! True worship, in spirit and truth.

Jesus desires that we worship Him wherever we are and in all circumstances. He makes this very clear in the conversation you’ll read about next, when He visits the home of three dear friends.

Luke 10:38-42 ~ Martha

We’ve all been there. Feeling inadequate, inefficient, and left alone with all the work. Whether the context is company coming, freshening a home, preparing a meal, completing a job, obtaining a job, training a kid, making a disciple, serving at church, you name it, we all pull a Martha now and again.

Frustrated! Folks will be kept waiting. Despairing! How impossible the task. Indignant! Another gets off scot free. Angry! I’m being ignored. Martha makes perfect sense to us.

But in Luke 10:38-42, Jesus doesn’t seem to understand. Or, maybe we should say He understands perfectly. With laser point precision, Jesus points out Martha’s sin. In Luke 10:41, with what sin does Jesus confront Martha? _____

From Luke 10:39, what has Mary been focused on? _____

What one thing has Mary chosen that is also necessary for Martha? _____

Martha’s attitude gives her away. We can clearly see that she is not worshipping Jesus. Notice how, in Luke 10:42, when we’ve chosen to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to His teaching, that can never be taken away, not by worry, anxiety, frustration, anger or self-pity. Therefore, what does our sin of worry, anxiety, frustration, anger, or self-pity reveal about us? _____

When we choose to worry, be anxious, frustrated, angry, or wallow in self-pity, we are neither worshipping Jesus, nor heeding His teaching.



Consider the two conversations we’ve studied. Can you identify the two topics common to the conversations we’ve studied from John 4:7-26 and Luke 10:38-42? _____

♡ SIN: In both conversations, with Sam and with Martha, Christ begins by confronting their sin— Sam’s adultery and Martha’s anxiety.

When you think about Sam’s state of numerous husbands, you might argue that you’ve not married five men and lived with a sixth. But, we all struggle with discontentment. We wonder if it would be easier to be married rather than single, to be single rather than married, or to be married to a different man. This is emotional adultery! At heart, we are all like Sam.

And, like Martha, we’re all guilty of worry and inner turmoil that distracts us from worshipping God. How have you focused on what others aren’t doing? How have you been derailed from joyfully doing what’s right because others should be helping you or doing things differently? This sin leads to accusing God, to choosing to believe the lie that God doesn’t care. Likely Martha was one of the women at the cross, watching the price Jesus paid because He cares, understanding fully what a fool she’d been to accuse Him of not caring.

♡ WORSHIP: In both conversations, Jesus brings the topic to worship. Jesus told Martha that Mary had chosen the best thing, to sit at His feet and worship Him. He said, “Worshipping God is the one choice that can never be taken away from you.” No matter what others do to you, you can always choose to worship. Jesus told Sam that worship is not a location, rather, a mindset of spirit and truth. Even in the worst circumstantial pit, you can choose to worship God.

After Corrie ten Boom survived a German concentration camp experience, she said, “There is no pit so deep that God’s love is not deeper still.” One morning at 4:00 A.M. during an inhumane roll call, standing outside barefoot in the bitter cold wearing only a thin covering, Corrie looked up and saw a bird fly by. She tells of how her heart filled with gratitude and she worshipped God.

No poor treatment by others and no difficult circumstance can stop you from worshipping God. The only thing that stops us from worship is our own sin. We can always choose to worship God, as long as we are willing to be confronted with and to confess our sin.

So, in the two conversations with women that we’ve studied so far, Jesus brought the focus around to the same two things. Aha! We all know that when a teacher repeats a lesson, it’s an important one. Does Jesus confront Sam and Martha with sin before or after bringing the conversation round to worship? _____ We need to recognize that it is necessary for all of us to confess our sin before we are able to worship.

Ask God to open the eyes of your heart to see areas where you’ve not wanted to confess, then grant you the humility to confess rather than defend, shift blame for, or excuse your sin.





Discussion Questions

Prior to your small group meeting, please answer the following questions. Choose one that you'd most like to discuss during your gathering. Also choose a second question in case your first preference is already taken.

1. Name three ways Jesus has taken the initiative to reveal Himself to you personally. Include how Jesus sought you out (Romans 8:28-29), how He confronts your sin (John 16:8-11, 1 John 1:8-10), and how He brings you to love and worship Him (Exodus 20:3): _____

2. We've studied that when Jesus talked about giving an unending supply of living water, He was referring to the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39). Why do you think Jesus used the analogy of fresh, spring-fed water to explain the Holy Spirit who indwells believers? _____

Think of a specific example of a time when you were parched with hopelessness, and His Spirit refreshed and comforted you: _____

3. Can you identify with the rejection experienced by Hagar and the Samaritan woman? Think back to a time when you felt rejected (for any reason). How did God show you His love? _____

What is the common factor in both Hagar and the Samaritan woman's life that caused other women to reject them? _____

In both cases, the women were rejected because of their relationships with men. Do you know a woman who has been rejected, perhaps because of relationships with men, with whom you need to share living water? _____

It's been said that the only thing worse than an adulterer is someone who is proud of not being one. We agree intellectually, but would we not be quick to join the women of Samaria who rejected the woman with five husbands? To which type of women does God hold out the offer of water in these two stories—the rejected ones or the rejecting ones? _____

In both Hagar and Sam's stories, we notice that the God of the Old and New Testaments is consistent in showing His love to women in need. God offers living water to rejected sinners. In order to be Christ-like, list practical ways that this lesson could impact our relationships with other women: _____

4. Is it possible for anyone to receive the gospel apart from recognizing and repenting of personal sin? _____

Of course not. The good news is that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and raised the third day to conquer sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). If we don't think we need a Savior, we won't believe and receive Jesus' work on the cross in payment for our sins. The gospel has nothing to do with our good works. Good works are all about Christ's righteousness for God's glory. And yet, we women are so quick to defend ourselves when confronted with sin. What was the result of the Samaritan woman's testimony where she openly admitted her sin and told others about how Jesus had confronted her (John 4:30 & 39)? _____



If we try to win others to Christ by confronting them with their sin, without open admission of our own sin, will they want to hear us? No! It's a turnoff. Even Jesus said He would reject those who come to Him because of their own goodness (Matthew 7:21-23). Is there someone you love who does not know Jesus personally? You will not attract them to Christ by talking about your goodness. How does this truth tie in with 1 Peter 3:1-4? _____

5. Christ's conversations (with Sam and Martha/Mary) teach us some practical ways we need to confess our own sin. Consider the following summary of the sins that Jesus pointed out in these two conversations. Discuss each one, talking about your personal struggle.
- ♥ Discontentment, murmuring, or complaining about your state.
 - ♥ Distractedness—Focusing on other's sin or what they are not doing. Being derailed from gladly glorifying God because you're focused on how others should be helping you, or treating you differently.
 - ♥ Accusing God—Choosing to believe the lie that God does not care about you.
 - ♥ Anxiety, worry, or turmoil.
6. Jesus distinctly contrasts Martha's choice to sin with Mary's choice to worship. After Jesus points out the Samaritan woman's sin, He talks to her about worship. How does confessing your sin bring you to worship? _____

Read Psalm 51:10-19, and note three ways that David worshipped after He confessed his sin:

Confess-Your-Sin Prayer Requests

Rather than prayer for others in need, within your group please ask prayer for your own growth as a woman. Choose one of the suggestions below:

1. Pray that I will be more aware of Jesus' love for me, and more grateful for His salvation.
2. Pray that I will be a blessing to _____ by the Holy Spirit's living water that flows from me (Galatians 5:22-23).
3. Pray that I will love _____ and be a fountain of living water to her.
4. Pray that I will accept humility and be quickly convicted of ungracious speech that raises me up in pride.
5. Pray for victory over my sin of _____.
6. Pray that my broken bones will rejoice and I will testify to _____ that God has confronted me of my sin and forgiven me. Pray that I will freely confess my sin to that person.
7. Other: _____



2. Be Forgiven

These days, young Dads and Moms search the web for a baby name. Not Joseph and Mary. But if they could have, Joseph already knew the baby's name: "You shall call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Hallelujah, what a name. Jesus rescues, delivers, saves us from our sins. Last lesson, we looked at two women whom Jesus confronted with their sin – Sam and Martha. Today we'll study how Jesus forgave two women—the woman in the Pharisee's house (Luke 7:36-50), whom we shall call Dinner Lady, and the woman in the synagogue (Luke 13:10-18), whom we shall call Church Lady. Both Dinner Lady and Church Lady enter conversation with Jesus in a troubled state of mind, and both of them walk away filled with hope, comfort and freedom from sin. That's what Jesus does! He brings healing, salvation from the bondage of sin.

Hey, this might be a good time to ask. Are you surprised, since our focus is biblical womanhood, that we haven't brought up "rules for women"? While it's true that Paul and Peter's letters provide clear teaching on the role of women, we dare not ignore Christ's focus on confession and forgiveness. The gospel—that Christ died, was buried, and rose again—provides the foundation for biblical womanhood. If we are to be biblical women, it begins with confessing our sin and being forgiven. If we haven't known mercy and shown mercy, we can keep a gazillion rules and not be biblical women.

Think for a moment about what we tend to do with biblical womanhood. That pendulum always wants to swing too far in one direction or the other. We are tempted to embrace extra-biblical rules about gender, or to rebelliously refuse biblical teaching on gender roles. We sin as quick to the right as to the left. Biblical womanhood carries no righteousness of its own, apart from relationship with Jesus Christ whereby we walk "in step with the truth of the gospel" (Galatians 2:14). In Jesus' first recorded sermon, he taught that our righteousness must exceed that of the law-interpretors and rule-makers (Matthew 5:21). Such righteousness is only Christ's, and Christ's righteousness only becomes ours when we recognize our spiritual poverty, grieve over our sin, are forgiven, and extend mercy. Then Christ's righteousness, miracle of miracles, becomes our certain reality (Philippians 3:8, 13).

Role differences are one area in which we women prove ourselves to be sinners. We admire bold, forward spirits, instead of gentle, quiet spirits (1 Peter 3:3-4). We laud independence, and belittle submission (Ephesians 5:22-24). We applaud leadership abilities, rather than followership choices (1 Corinthians 11:3). We validate grouchiness and sour moods, rather than obey the command to rejoice always (Philippians 4:4). We define righteousness by our lifestyle choices, rather than by Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:21-23). We all need to recognize our personal bent in this, and confess legalistic/feministic tactics. Of course, we could as easily point to ways men deviate from biblical manhood. But the point we will study today, from Christ's interaction with Church Lady and Dinner Lady, is that we must confess our own sin and focus on His sweet forgiveness, and not cast stones at sinners.

Luke 7:36-50 ~ Dinner Lady

While you read the story of Dinner Lady, in your minds eye watch her lovingly bathe and kiss Jesus' feet. Now think for a moment about Dinner Lady's reputation.

♥ Read Luke 7:37. Fill in the blank: She was "a woman in the city who was a _____."

♥ Read Luke 7:39. Fill in the blank: The Pharisee knew that she was a "_____."

From Luke 7:38, how would you describe the emotional state of Dinner Lady, the sinner? _____

Last week we studied how Martha's sister, Mary, worshipped Jesus by sitting and listening to Him. In



“I died for your sin”

our last chapter of this study, we will study another way Mary worshipped Jesus (recorded in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-8). We'll see that she anointed Jesus' feet with fragrant perfume from an alabaster jar, just as Dinner Lady in Luke 7. How does Luke 7:38 describe Dinner Lady's act of worship? _____

Now read John 13:1-17. In this text, whose feet are being washed? _____
In John 13:8, did Jesus allow Peter to wash Jesus' feet? _____ Don't you love that women were permitted to wash Jesus' feet? Does this teach us something about service? What a joy that women were given such a special privilege in adoring Jesus!

Why does Dinner Lady show Jesus such great adoration? Read Luke 7:46-48, to answer the question of why she so lovingly worshiped Jesus. Write down the reason here: _____

Dinner Lady crashes that dinner because of her faith in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. Before she leaves the room, Jesus deliberately and loudly speaks of her forgiveness. Is Dinner Lady's emotional state when she leaves different than at the beginning of the story? (Luke 7:50) How so? _____

There is only one path to the peace we all crave—forgiveness by Jesus Christ. No numbing of feelings, not even the strongest cocktail of prescription or illegal drugs, will bring true peace. No adrenaline rush, not even shopping, exercising, eating or non-eating excesses, chocolate, or coffee will give us what we crave. True peace is only found in the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

The gospel's good news is that we are forgiven. If the gospel is alive in us—meaning we have admitted that we deserved to die (not Jesus), and we have accepted His death as payment for our sins—peace will rule our hearts. We have confessed our sin. We have been forgiven. Therefore, our attitude toward those who hurt us is no longer that of turbulence or resentment, but rather calmness and mercy that reflects the beautiful attitude by which Jesus forgives us.

John 8:3-11 records another sweet instance in which a woman came to experience being forgiven. She'd been caught in the act—immorality! Death-by-stoning worthy! The indignant religious leaders wanted Jesus to pick up that first stone. He said the first stone was to be picked up by the one without sin. And as the One without sin bent, not to pick up a stone but to write in the sand, the would-be stoners skulked away. Jesus then held a brief conversation with the accused woman, in which he presented to her the secret of peace. What were Jesus' instructions to her in John 8:11? _____

Luke 13:10-17 ~ Church Lady

Dinner Lady had a reputation as a sinner. In Luke 13:11, how is Church Lady described? _____

Eighteen years is a long time to walk around bent over and unable to straighten yourself. Just think of being unable to look anyone in the eye, and certainly never have normal sexual relations with her husband. Imagine her embarrassment as people stare, perhaps laughing and making jokes, hinting that she's committed some horrible sin. In Luke 13:16, how does Jesus describe Church Lady's bondage to a disabling spirit? _____



We don't know whether Church Lady tries to catch Jesus' attention, whether she deliberately tries to avoid it, or whether she is oblivious to Him. She doesn't ask for anything. It is Jesus who watches her, and calls her to come to him. At that sound of His voice, her heart surely skipped a beat. Read Luke 13:13 and describe what Jesus does in freeing her of her bondage: _____

How do you think Church Lady felt as Jesus healed her? _____

♡ Describe Church Lady's response to being healed (Luke 13:13): _____

♡ Describe the ruler of the synagogue's response when Jesus healed her (Luke 13:14): _____

Jesus teaches a few lessons here. We see that He wanted the religious leaders to learn that suffering people are more important than about thirsty animals, but there is also another distinct lesson.

♡ In Luke 13:16, what does Jesus call the Church Lady? _____

♡ In Romans 4:16, who are the children of Abraham? _____

♡ In Matthew 13:43, what does Jesus say is true about those who believe? _____

Jesus wants the Pharisees to see women through different eyes than what is called for by the custom of the day. He wants them to see that women are equally in line for God's promises.

But it's important for us to note that after Church Lady is healed of her disabling spirit, she does not turn around and criticize the men who call her less than an animal (it's OK with them if you take care of a sick animal on the Sabbath, but don't heal a woman!). The ruler of the synagogue sins against Church Lady when he says she is not worthy of healing on the Sabbath. But Church Lady does not complain or criticize him. She does not bite down on the anger displayed by the synagogue ruler. To do so would have put the focus on her and remove it from the glory of God. We noted earlier, from Luke 13:13, that Church Lady responded to being healed by glorifying God.

Jesus' words call us to look at our brothers and sisters through those same eyes—not just as men and women, but rather as sons and daughters of Abraham in need of God's mercy and grace. Just as the men needed to see Church Lady as a daughter of Abraham worthy of God's mercy, we women need to see men as sons of Abraham, worthy of God's mercy.

A critical spirit reveals a heart of pride and discontentment. Whatever your past holds, when you've been forgiven, you can forgive. When you've been forgiven, you are able to stand up and glorify God. What stops us? Focus on our personal "goodness" (which actually reeks of self-righteous pride), and focus on other's sin (which is rooted in stinking discontentment). God's gracious mercy still performs miracles! No matter what's in your past, today you can stand up and glorify God.

Both Dinner Lady and Church Lady glorified God. They could have:

- ♡ Criticized others instead of being grateful.
- ♡ Wallowed in their past instead of working to edify Christ.
- ♡ Focused on the sin of those around them instead of worshipping Jesus.



- ♡ Held back instead of giving their best to Christ.
- ♡ Defended themselves instead of glorifying God.

In the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, the following truths will characterize us:

- ♡ We will not be paralyzed by our past. Instead of sinful response patterns (to God, people, and life in general), our future will be characterized by ever-growing victory. Dinner Lady did not allow the rejection and condemnation heaped upon her by the Pharisees to stop her from loving and worshipping Jesus.
- ♡ We will remember what we've been rescued from—bondage to sin—and work forward to please our Redeeming Lord and new Master—freedom to obey. Jesus told the woman in John 8, "Go and sin no more."
- ♡ We will long to give glory to God. We will hate and fight every thought that is complaint, grumbling, rights-seeking, selfishness, resentment, self-pity, bitterness. We will be grateful. Church Lady spoke no word against those who spoke against her, choosing instead to glorify God.

The forgiveness of Jesus Christ is a cleansing fire. It wipes out bitterness with sweet mercy. Do you know that forgiveness? Are you a merciful woman who responds to rejection with love and worship of Jesus? Are you an obedient woman who responds to condemnation with sinning no more? Are you a God-glorifying woman who speaks no negative word against others?

Discussion Questions

Prior to your small group meeting, please answer the following questions. Choose one that you'd most like to discuss during your gathering. Also choose a second question in case your first preference is already taken.

1. Read Titus 2:3. What two things are required of an older woman, in terms of the things she talks about? Hint: one is attitude/behavior, and one has to do with words. _____

List and discuss examples of words that evidence this attitude: _____

2. We've studied how Dinner Lady washed Christ's dirty feet. In John 13:1-17, Jesus taught the disciples to wash dirty feet. John 13:17 teaches that thinking right leads to doing right, which leads to blessing (feeling right). James echoed that lesson in James 1:25, and in the following verses (James 1:26-27), he explains two ways in which thinking right leads to doing right: 1. Controlling our tongue, and 2. Providing care for those in need. What are we tempted to do instead of controlling our tongues and caring for others' needs? _____

How do speaking critically, and being selfish, result in depression and despair, instead of blessing? _____



List specific ways in which to “wash dirty feet” by controlling your tongue rather than speaking negatively about others, and by caring for the needy rather than focusing on yourself: _____

3. Read Luke 13:16, Matthew 5:5, 5:28-29, and Matthew 7:12. How does Jesus help men and women relate to one another in purity? _____

Our culture communicates an entirely different message through entertainment and advertisements. One way our culture balks at purity is through female immodesty. What are some ways we can help our daughters stay away from attraction to the impurity that our culture promotes? _____

4. As we’ve seen in the Scriptures above (Luke 13:16, Matthew 5:5, 5:28-29, and Matthew 7:12), Jesus helps men and women relate in purity. Clearly Jesus rescues women from the attack pornography wields against their personhood. However, it’s important to note that men are not the only guilty ones. As well as increasing numbers of women falling prey to the lure of the physical fantasy of porn, many women choose to live emotional fantasy lives. What is an emotional fantasy life? Any wishful thinking about another man besides a husband qualifies as “emotional fantasy.” Chick flicks are popular because they feed emotional fantasy. The number of romance novels sold to Christian women testifies to the allure of emotional fantasy. How can you guard your heart against falling into emotional fantasy? _____

(Please note: When confessing thought-life sin, it is appropriate to confess to God, who knows your thoughts. If you make a verbal confession of sinful thoughts, do not make it specific, keep it general. For example, “I confess my sin of lust” is enough said, unless you’ve entered a sinful relationship—electronic or physical).

Additionally, technology brings inordinate relationships into easy reach (for example, just type one name social networking and you’ve opened the door to re-connecting with a high school beau). Social media adds the temptation to present to others a self-defined and self-focused fantasy-image. These days, even the secular world is warning about “internet addiction” and the dangers of the excessive self-focus inherent in social media. Additionally, the ability to know, with the click of a button, some interesting tidbit about others provides new temptations in the area of gossip. As Christian women, how can we guard against the social and emotional temptations lurking before us in our technological world? _____



5. Read 1 John 1:9. What is true about us after we've confessed sin? _____

After Church Lady was healed from bondage to Satan, she glorified God. Dinner Lady's forgiveness story is connected with her loving adoration of Jesus, evidenced by washing His feet. But sometimes, after we confess sin, we talk about "not feeling forgiven." Or, say things like, "How can Jesus forgive me for what I've done? My sin is too great." These responses reveal pride that is not willing to trust God's great gospel. Name specific ways you would change, in your home and church, if you responded to Christ's forgiveness by glorifying God like Church Lady? _____

Name specific ways to serve, in your home and church, out of adoration of Jesus because He has forgiven you. Are any of these ways to serve comparable to washing dirty feet like Dinner Lady? How might you push yourself to serve outside of your comfort zone? (Consider this: Are you really serving if you are doing something that fits nicely into your schedule?) _____

Be-Forgiven Prayer Requests

Rather than prayer for others in need, within your group please ask prayer for your own growth as a woman. Choose one of the suggestions below:

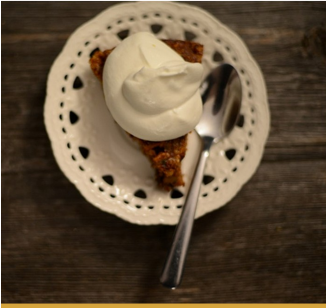
1. Pray that I will glorify God by respectful words that build up instead of critical words that tear down.
2. Pray that I will "wash dirty feet" by _____.
3. Pray that I confess ways I've bought into our culture's exploitation of the female body, and work with my daughters to dress modestly.
4. Pray that God will reveal any emotional fantasy I've indulged in, and grant me victory as I confess, then memorize and recite His Word instead.

5. Pray that I will grow a gentle and quiet spirit by _____.

6. Pray that I will confess my sin of not trusting God that what He forgives is forgiven, and for continuing to wallow in sin that I have already confessed. Pray that I will be so grateful for Christ's forgiveness that I readily serve others.

7. Other:





3. Persist in Faith

John 11:1-44 ~ Martha

Here we are, back with our old friend Martha. Remember how Jesus confronted her with the sin of anxiety and worry? It's always interesting how we respond when faced with sin. Often, we buckle, blame, or bail. When we buckle under, we refuse the joy of repentance. When we blame others, we lose opportunity to grow. When we bail out, that is quit and move on to other spouses, friends, or churches, we often leave damage in the wake. But not Martha. What name does Martha use for Jesus in John 11:28? _____ Here in John 11, Martha has moved from accusing Jesus of not caring about her, to wanting Him to teach her. When confronted with her sin, Martha confessed, she agreed with Jesus. Now she is walking in repentance!

And what does Jesus think about Martha? John 11:5 reads: "Now Jesus _____ Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Did you notice who is listed first? But sometimes, love isn't what you expect. John 11:14-15 recounts Jesus telling the disciples He was glad Lazarus died before they arrived. (Imagine the disciples looking at one another and shaking their heads.) Why does Jesus say He is glad that Lazarus died? _____

Without faith it is impossible to please God, and Jesus wants to grow their faith.

Read John 11:16 and write down what Thomas and the other disciples expected would occur: _____

Take time to turn back and read John 10:24-39. Did you notice that the Jesus is on the escape? The Jews, driven by unbelief that He is the Messiah, have been taunting Jesus. They've tried to stone Him and arrest Him. So in the disciples minds, Lazarus isn't going to be the only dead guy. Not much hope in their thinking. But, Jesus is all about giving hope. True hope.

♥ In John 11:25-26, Jesus is trying to help Martha understand the great benefit of faith in Jesus. What is that benefit? _____

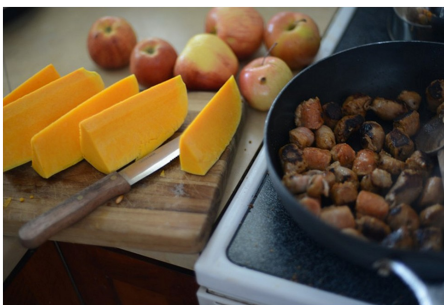
♥ From John 11:27, write down the words Martha uses to describe Jesus: _____

♥ Turn to Matthew 16:16. Write down the words Peter uses to describe Jesus: _____

When Peter gives his statement of faith in Matthew 16, Jesus responds with instruction for building the church. Jesus gives Peter a job to do, a church to lead. The truth which Peter spoke about Jesus, his statement of faith, is the Rock Solid reality upon which the church is built.

But Jesus responds to Martha's statement of faith in another manner. Not instruction. Not teaching. Not a job to do. If ever you've seen a man flexing His muscles, it's here. For Martha (and Mary and the crowd), Jesus presents a brilliant, glorious, can't-miss-it demonstration of power and strength and love. In effect, Jesus says, "Watch this," and speaks life. The sound of His voice sends death's cold cruelty into a cowering retreat. To Peter, Jesus assigns leadership. To Martha, Jesus assures life.

♥ In between Martha's statement and Jesus' power demonstration, Mary enters the picture. What does Jesus notice about Mary in John 11:32-33? _____



"I will reward you"

♡ How does Jesus respond to Mary in John 11:35? _____

♡ What does God's Word teach us in Romans 12:15? _____

From Jesus' response to Mary, we learn a lesson about persisting in faith. It's an extremely important lesson, with many ramifications relevant to American culture. In the last century, the church has allowed psychology to speak. Plenty of books and even Bible study guides have "spiritualized" psychological teaching about depression. We've come to think that responsible treatment for depression is medication, a mind-numbing solution. Not so. The Bible says that Scripture holds hope (Romans 15:4), and that it is sufficient to equip us for every situation (2 Timothy 3:17), including times of despair or sadness.

The Bible particularly provides what is needed to deal with the gamut of emotions. For example, there are more Psalms of lament than there are Psalms of praise. All through Scripture, and here by Jesus in living color, we are taught that there are times to grieve and be sad, and that it's not just OK, it's important. Jesus Himself shows us in John 11:35 that grief is good. Let's help each other by grieving together. Let's put our arms around our hurting sisters. Let's cry together because death is horrible and final. Let's help one another smile over wonderful memories, and help one another forgive to get out from under painful memories.

But in the end, we also need to encourage one another with Martha's faith. We need to help our sisters come to the inevitable joy that trumps depression because Christ ultimately wins over death. Jesus Christ always shines light into dark, and as women who walk in light, we have a responsibility to shine light into the dark places of bleak emotions (Hebrews 12:12-13).

In previous weeks, we've studied that Jesus calls us to confess sin and be forgiven. Are you walking in the darkness of depression? Read 1 John 1:7 and fill in the blanks "If we walk in the _____, as He is in the _____, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Now, go ask a sister who is walking in joy what sin she has recently confessed. Ask her to help you learn how to persist in faith.

Next we'll learn about Bleeding Lady, who had many reasons to be depressed, but rather persisted in faith.

*Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34,
Luke 8:42-48 ~ Bleeding Lady*

Bleeding Lady is not just a case of PMS. After twelve years of doctor visits that cost all she has, her condition only deteriorates. To make matters worse, she is a public spectacle, excluded from normal social and religious involvement, an outcast. Levitical law excludes a woman who is bleeding from entering the temple's section for women, so everyone knows she is ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15:25-28). Sex is not permitted with a husband during the time of ceremonial uncleanness. It all adds up to twelve distressing years for Bleeding Lady.



Mark 5:34—And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

Matthew 9:22—Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.

Luke 8:48—And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Bleeding Lady skulks toward Jesus, head down, heart throbbing. Someone might notice and force her to leave the crowd! Imagine the urgency with which her trembling fingers reach towards the corner of Jesus' robe. What is Bleeding Lady thinking that gives her such courage (Mark 5:28)? _____

It makes you wonder why she isn't concerned about Jesus becoming unclean. Leviticus 15:19-23 says that a person who touches a bleeding woman, or the person whom she touches, becomes unclean. She knows this all too well. But to some level, she also understands that Jesus is the fulfillment of the laws that bind her. And of course Jesus doesn't become unclean! The OT purity laws were just a symbol to point to Him! He is the one who cleans our uncleanness! And His cleansing not only purifies, it also heals (Psalm 103:1-4).

In the verses to the left, read Christ's response to Bleeding Lady. What title does He give her? _____ What phrase is repeated in each verse on the left? _____

Look up Mark 5:29 and Luke 8:44, and write down the word that describes Bleeding Lady's healing: _____ Does Jesus speak with her before or after she's healed? _____

The disciples heard Jesus' words, and they made certain sure, three of them telling us about it, that we'd know what He said to her. Her faith—faith un-paled by anemia, faith undaunted by rejection, faith that reached and reached and reached until her fingers felt fabric—her faith made her well. But another important lesson, which easily goes unnoticed, is that all three—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—tell Bleeding Lady's story as occurring within another story, as if Bleeding Lady is not the big news, but she somehow impacts it. There's a lesson in the fact that her healing happened when it did, a story within a story.

The disciples begin their eye-witness report with Jesus walking along the Capernaum road in the press of the crowd. An important man, Jairus, runs toward Him and begs healing for his twelve-year-old daughter. As Jesus begins to follow Jairus, the crowd hems in expectantly. Of course he will help this well-known leader. But then Bleeding Lady touches Jesus, and we read the story of her healing, before we read about what happened to Jairus' daughter.

Two people – Jairus, a synagogue ruler, and Bleeding Lady, a temple outcast. Jairus, a prominent man, and Bleeding Lady, an ostracized woman. Jairus, an academic, and Bleeding Lady, an anemic. A man of fame, a woman of shame. A man of power, a woman of weakness. A man with a twelve-year old daughter he loved, a woman with a twelve-year old illness she hated.

Jesus knows Bleeding Lady has touched his robe and taken from Him just a drop of the power He will someday unleash on all that brings sickness and death. A candle's flicker from the sun's glaring blast. A penny from a gazillionaire. It's not a big deal, is it? Certainly Bleeding Lady is not the only person who ever touched Jesus for healing. John said the world's not big enough to contain all the books that would have to be written to tell all of Jesus' miracles. So why does Jesus publicly make a fuss about it? What does it matter? The healing is already done. Why does the Power-house ask, "Who touched My robe?" Even His friends questioned Him (Mark 5:31).

It's not that Jesus doesn't empathize with Bleeding Lady's humiliation and embarrassment. After all, He too would walk bleeding and rejected through a crowd. But still He stops. He waits until she comes forward, fearful, trembling, falling to her knees. To all appearances, He even pushes her

embarrassment farther, asking questions until He's pulled from her a public disclosure of the whole sordid tale. But then Jesus speaks, and twelve years of shame become nothing more than a backdrop for bright-shining, tender, unforgettable glory.

♡ Take a moment to think about Bleeding Lady's world from that moment on. In Mark 5:34 and Luke 8:48, what does Jesus command about Bleeding Lady's emotions? _____

♡ In Matthew 9:22, what encouraging phrase does Jesus speak to Bleeding Lady? _____

Can you imagine Jesus saying it to you? "Daughter, take heart. Go in peace. You are well, and all is well. From now on you will no longer be characterized by embarrassment and shame. You will be studied, and you will be admired for your persistent faith."

Remember, Bleeding Lady is just the side-story. While she is being singled out for a public pronouncement of peace and healing, Jairus' daughter dies. A runner delivers the tragic news, and Jesus responds with these words, an echo of the living demonstration provided by Bleeding Lady: "Do not fear, only believe." A woman, a humble outcast, a persistent beggar, without confidence to express what she longed for in words, has provided a lesson in lack of fear and presence of faith. For whom? For a man, a prominent ruler. For all of us, more than two-thousand years of us.

And then Jesus takes that dead twelve-year-old by the hand, and with one "Talitha kum," the little girl gets up. An utterly astounding miracle. But, are we listening? Hear Jesus: "Ladies, get up, you're not done yet. Get up and walk in faith. Be living demonstrations of persistent faith."

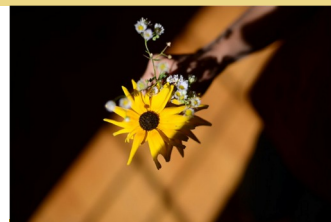
Jesus commends faith above all human ideals. In this story-within-a-story, the story of Bleeding Lady that interrupts the story about a powerful man asking help for his daughter, the lesson is about faith. And it's bigger than, "You must have faith." Jesus wants us to know that faith transcends position, social status, education, and gender. Faith that teaches is faith that reaches and reaches, trembling in weakness. That day, when Bleeding Lady touched the Robe that she knew provided peace and healing, she set an example—faith lived out by a woman, for a man.

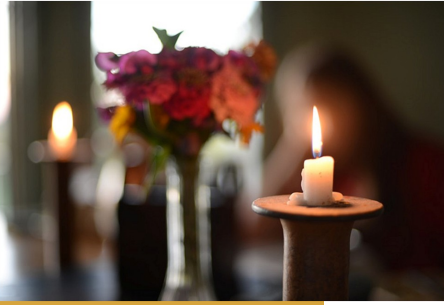
Please read 1 Corinthians 11:9. Who is created for whom? _____ is created for _____. In Paul's words we hear the reverberation of a creation reality, "Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man." Women, we have a job to do. We get to be living examples of persistent faith—faith lived out by women, for men.

Matthew 15:21-28, Mark 7:24-30

Crumb Lady

Since the next conversation we'll study is with a woman who begged for crumbs, let's just go with it and call her Crumb Lady. Crumb Lady lives outside the predominantly Jewish area, in a coastal town on the border of the Mediterranean Sea, a region known as Tyre and Sidon. In the time of Judges, Tyre and Sidon had belonged to Israel, and there are still Jewish folks in town. But Crumb Lady is a Greek, Syro-Phoenician Canaanite. One thing she knows about Jews, she could never meet their cleanliness standards. And not only is she a born pagan, her daughter has a public reputation as an unclean spirit. Crumb Lady fully accepts and expects that Jews will look down on her.





The day Jesus runs into Crumb Lady, He's veered away from His usual places of ministry. We all need a "day at the seashore" now and again, a little respite from the crowds, right? Jesus wanted to be alone (Mark 7:24), but Crumb Lady found Him. And at first glance when you read the passages recounting Crumb Lady's story, doesn't it seem as if Jesus has insulted her? What term does Jesus use for Crumb Lady in Matthew 15:26 and Mark 7:28? _____

Do you like emoticons? For texting, they provide little clues as to facial expression. Matthew and Mark provide no clues as to Jesus' expression or tone of voice, but we know that His words (which strike us as insulting) don't silence Crumb Lady, nor send her cowering. Jews often used the term "kyon" (which refers to wild homeless scavenger dogs) to refer to impure people. But Jesus put a little twist on it, using the term "kynarion" (which refers to a domestic pet). Given her background, it may well be that Crumb Lady was accustomed to the insult "kyon," but when Jesus spoke "kynarion," it came across as loving. So Jesus does not insult Crumb Lady, however, he does test her faith.

♡ In Matthew 15:23, what is Jesus' initial response when Crumb Lady begs for mercy? _____

♡ What do Jesus' disciples want Him to do with her? _____

Persistent faith does not protest, "How could you test me like this?" Persistent faith doesn't get side-tracked by discouraging words. Crumb Lady ignores the disciples, accepts whatever Jesus wants to say, and then begs for just a little of His power.

And of course Jesus heals her daughter. Demons flee from Jesus. That's what rebellion does, runs from the power of God. But Crumb Lady doesn't run. She persists in faith.

In Matthew 15:28, Jesus says there's something great about Crumb Lady. What is it? _____

Discussion Questions

Prior to your small group meeting, please answer the following questions. Choose one that you'd most like to discuss during your gathering. Also choose a second question in case your first preference is already taken.

1. Jesus confronted Martha about her sin, in Luke 10:38-42. Martha calls Jesus "Teacher," in John 11:38. If Martha had been un-teachable, had defended herself or made excuses regarding her sin, she would not have become the woman of faith we studied in John 11. When a friend tries to point out your sin, are you teachable? What are some of the ways we defend ourselves and so lose the opportunity to confess and become women who persist in faith? _____
2. The New Testament records two people verbalizing the same statement of faith – Peter and Martha—but Jesus' responses are different. Jesus gave Peter the job of building the church, but gave Martha a demonstration of power. All through the Bible, God presents men and women as equal in personhood and spirituality, but with different roles and functions in the home and church. God holds men responsible for leadership or head-ship, and women responsible for "follower-ship" or "helper-ship." Do you ever get discouraged in your supportive role? How can



you be encouraged by Jesus' demonstration of power, deliberately waiting until Lazarus had died, and then raising him from the dead? _____

3. We can learn a lot about Christ's response to Mary's grief. He knew the outcome of the day, Lazarus' resurrection, but still, He wept with Mary. List and discuss three ways we can also weep with someone who is grieving, while presenting the hope of eternal life. _____

4. Crumb Lady didn't protest when Christ apparently refused to help her. She persisted in faith and begged for crumbs. It's easy to protest the trials God uses to discipline us, but Hebrews 12:11 teaches that they train us. Refusing them only results in bitterness (Hebrews 12:15). Have you endured a trial? Talk about the difference it makes to refuse discouragement (Hebrews 12:3, 13-14). What does it look like for you to persist in faith and beg for crumbs? _____

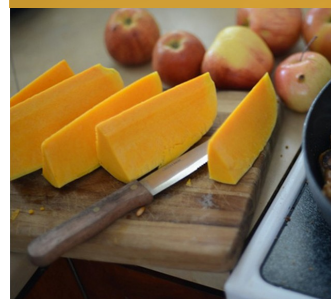
Read Luke 18:1-7, where Jesus tells a parable about a persistent widow. Interesting that Jesus chose to tell it about a woman, a widow. How often does Jesus tell us to cry out to God about our problems in Luke 18:7? _____

5. Consider Christ's conversation with Salome, Zebedee's wife and the mother of James and John. In Matthew 20:20-22, when she requested honor for her sons, Jesus answered Salome, "You don't know what you're asking," and then He disregarded her. God is all about His own Name and glory, not ours. What can we learn about prayer from the persistent widow of Luke 18:1-7, or Salome, or passages such as 2 Corinthians 12:8, Philippians 4:6-7, or 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18? Share what God is teaching you about the prayer of persistent faith: _____

Persist-in-Faith Prayer Requests

Rather than prayer for others in need, within your group please ask prayer for your own growth as a woman. Choose one of the suggestions below:

1. Pray that I will be grateful and learn when corrected, rather than defensive about my sin.
2. Pray that I will embrace my "helping" role in the home and church, and that the Lord will open my eyes to His power as I do so.
3. Pray for me in my grief, or pray for me as I comfort a friend in her grief.
4. Pray that I set an example of faith in a trial I am enduring.
5. Pray that I will beg for crumbs of God's grace in persistent faith.
6. Pray that when I face difficult situations, I will persist in crying to God day and night.
7. Other: _____





4. Humbly Serve

Matt 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35, Luke 8:19-21, John 2:1-12 ~ Mary, mother of Jesus

Ever notice what a mom will do for her kids? She'll breathe in the feverish kisses of a sick child and keep hugging while vomit soaks her T-shirt. She'll croon anything from lullabies to national anthems that kick-off a basement hockey game. A mom will read sagas about dragons, warriors, and impossible conquests if it means a sliver of conversation with her rushing whirlwind of a son. Every mom knows Mary found a way to hold conversations with Jesus. The Mary who worried and nagged and exasperated, just like us. The Mary who knew she needed a Savior, just like us (Luke 2:47).

Yet, there are many ways Mary provides an admirable example for us. We'll begin this section of our study by considering some of the ways Mary embraced and obeyed biblical womanhood.

Read John 2:1-12. It's the beginning of Christ's ministry years; He and His mom and brothers have travelled to a wedding. At the wedding, a problem arises. Mary may be assisting with food, because she knew the kitchen secret that the wine hasn't lasted as long as the wedding. In John 2:3, what does Mary tell Jesus? _____

From John 2:5, write down her statement to the servants: _____

We have few clues as to her initial tone of voice, but her words indicate a calm, controlled attitude. As well as a serene, solution-based approach on Mary's part, this short sentence also evidences a respectful spirit. Her words undoubtedly instilled respect in the servants toward Jesus.

Think about any capacity in which you are involved in training children. What if you memorized Mary's statement to the servants, and spoke it clearly and concisely to those kids? When they are young, it would most likely be in the context of doing what their dad says, and later in the context of obeying God. By following Mary's example, we can teach our kids respectful obedience.

Back at the wedding, we see that Mary communicates the predicament and instructs obedience. And Jesus responds by honoring her request, even though He explains it isn't His hour. Mary's manner of communicating provides a smart two-part paradigm. How does she explain the problem? Is it with intensity and drama or does she merely present the facts? Mary does not manipulate with an emotional presentation. And, how many times does she say it? _____ A great definition for nagging is saying it more than once. Mary does not nag; she presents the problem one time.

Mary attitude reveals respectful submission. She initiated the conversation, presenting the facts to Jesus. But then, she left initiative for what would be done entirely up to Him. In her statement to the servants, there is nothing to indicate what she thinks Jesus should do. And that is a great example of how respect talks.

♥ Another instance where Mary modeled respect is seen in Luke 1:38. In Luke 1:38, what did Mary say to the angel? _____

Mary was docile before God. Hmm. The opening line of His "sermon on the mount" in Matthew 5:3 states "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Could it possibly be that a picture of His mom came into Jesus' mind as He spoke?

"I give you a role and responsibilities"

From John 2:4, did you notice Jesus' response to Mary when she presents the problem? He addresses her as "woman" (*gyne*), a title that expresses either indignation or admiration, favor, kindness, respect. "Woman" isn't cold on its own, until Jesus follows it with, "What is that to me and to you?" That expression denotes mild detachment, at best. Jesus is distancing Himself from his mother. As we consider Mary further, we will see that Jesus sets Himself apart from her.

We've been studying John 2, but take a few moments now to open your Bible and place markers in the other three passages—Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:31-35, and Luke 8:19-21. In these passages, we see that Jesus is leaving home to be involved in ministry. Mary and her other sons follow Jesus to where He ministers to crowds. In Matthew 12:46 and Luke 8:19, what did Mary want to do? _____

♥ What request is sent to Jesus in Matthew 12:47, Mark 3:32, and Luke 8:20? _____

♥ What is Jesus' response in Matthew 12:48-50, Mark 3:34-35? _____

Here we see Mary, together with the muscle of Jesus' brothers, attempt, unsuccessfully, to persuade Jesus. He responds with a strong detachment from anyone who does not do the will of the Father. Jesus will continue to distance Himself and His disciples from His blood relatives. For Christians, the strongest unifying agent is not family, but rather the blood of Jesus Christ.

Luke 11:27-28 ~ The Admiring Woman

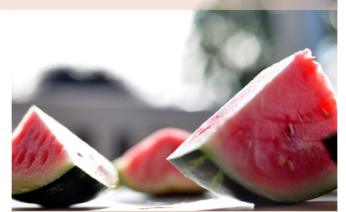
Jesus is coming! He passes through town. People throng. A woman's voice rises above the crowd. What does she call out to Jesus in Luke 11:27? _____

We have to think she meant well, perhaps in those days that was even a popular blessing. All the same, how does Jesus respond? _____

Did you notice? Jesus' words to this woman, who tries to elevate his mother, is similar to what He said to his mother and brothers. Jesus is pleased by those who hear and obey the Word of God, not by family ties. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said it this way: "The very blessing which belonged to the virgin mother of Jesus belongs to every soul that hears God's Word and keeps it."

♥ In John 14:21, what does Jesus say about the people who hear God's commands and keep them? _____

Jesus denounces the importance of blood relationships. This is hard for us to accept, we women who love family so. Sometimes we even think we can out-compassion Jesus, as if what our unsaved loved ones need most is a relationship with us. No! All that will matter on that great judgment day is whether our loved ones knew Jesus. After we die, if we have taken every opportunity to speak Christ





Matthew 10:21, 35-36— Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.

Mark 13:12—And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death.

Luke 12:53, 21:16—They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. ... You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death.

and reflect His righteousness, to confess sin and model mercy, we will have given to those we love what they truly need. If we embrace compromise, if we are silent about Christ, or if we disobey Christ for the sake of relationship with our prodigals and rebels, it's nothing less than selfishness and pride on our part. Jesus said that He came to separate us from those who don't obey Him, and family members will be our temptation. Read Matthew 10:21, 35-36, Mark 13:12, Luke 12:51-53, and Luke 21:16 in the margin on the left.

As Jesus lowers the importance of our blood relationships, He raises to ultimate importance our love relationship with Him. In that relationship, He provides the family we need. Think of the Jesus' dying moments. He sees his mother standing, weeping. He sees John. And He connects them: "Woman, behold your son," and "Behold your mother" (John 19:26-27). No one has an excuse for loneliness; there's always someone in the church who needs a relationship with you because you love Jesus.

Repeatedly, we see that Jesus' focus shifts away from the family ties of mother and brothers, toward another group of men and women (Matthew 12:49). He says, "Here they are, these are my brother and sister and mother, these who do the will of My Father in heaven." Who are the women in Christ's life, whom He called his mother and sister? We are about to meet three of them.

Luke 8:1-3

Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna

- ♥ In Luke 8:2, we find out what Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna had in common. What had Jesus done for them? _____
- ♥ In Luke 8:1-3, what did Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna do for Jesus during the years of His earthly ministry? _____

These women, and others, travelled through cities and villages with Jesus and His ragamuffin band. Evidently this is how Christ and his twelve disciples were provided with food and shelter. We don't know Susanna's story, but we know that Joanna gave up time out of life in a palace, where her husband Chuza served as King Herod's steward. And we know that Mary Magdalene had been healed of seven demons. What motivated these women to serve? Love and gratitude to Jesus.

From their example, we can be warned against a popular idea women sometimes convey that, "As a biblical woman, if I only serve my family, it's enough." Beyond our homes, women are called to serve others with generosity and kindness (Proverbs 31:20, 26). Part of serving our families in a biblical manner is not only to teach and set the example of service, but also to enable and equip them to serve Christ's body (Hebrews 13:1-7, Galatians 5:13, and Titus 2:3-5).

In 1 Timothy 5:10, what are women commended for? _____

When we serve, we are being like Jesus (Matthew 20:28). Serving is a great privilege.

We come now to considering conversations Christ held with women just prior to, during, and after His death and resurrection. It is especially poignant to see women serving Jesus so intimately at this time, and to hear Him giving them responsibilities.



Matt. 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, John 12:1-8

Mary, Martha's Sister

We've met Mary before. You know, the one who choose well, to sit at Jesus' feet and learn from Him. Here she takes fragrant ointment, which today would be worth about \$40,000.00, and pours it on Jesus' head and feet. There's a protest. Too much money! It should be for the poor. But Jesus says, "Let her go. She's preparing me for my burial" (Matthew 26:12, Mark 14:8, John 12:7).

♡ In Matthew 26:13 and Mark 14:9, what does Jesus say will be included in the gospel story? ____

Immediately preceding this account, Matthew records Christ's famous story about "sheep and goats" (Matthew 25:31-46). Lest we think too quickly that we are the sheep on the right, let Mary's act of sacrificial service convict us. When was the last time we sacrificed to:

- ♡ Feed the hungry—When was your last Happy Meal delivery?
- ♡ Take in strangers—Can your Family Care Deacon count on you to give hospitality?
- ♡ Clothe the naked—What clothing have you given that wasn't a closet leftover?
- ♡ Visit the sick—When was your last hospital stop?
- ♡ Minister to prisoners—There's a sacrifice to completing biblical counseling training, but it prepares you and provides opportunity to minister to those in bondage.

Luke 23:27-31

Daughters of Jerusalem

Excruciating. Unbearable. Their hero, their healer, their Holy Lord—His skin torn and His muscles so bruised that the weight of the cross pitches him to the ground—stumbles along the path of His death. In torment, the women mourn, lament, wail. Simon the Cyrenian takes the cross. Through the spit of blood, Jesus speaks. To the women. Please take the time to write down His words, as recorded in Luke 23:28-31 here: _____

Weep not for Me, Jesus says. Weep for yourselves, and be ready. As the days of Christ's presence (green wood) recede in time (dry wood), be ready. Jesus knows, and He stumbles on because He is about to provide the hope to which every mother must cling. Jewish mothers—children torn from their breasts to be shoved into concentration camp ovens. Iraqi and Syrian mothers—children before them, the chubby necks they'd once supported now headless, spurting blood. North Korean mothers—children torn from their wombs in live in prison camp cages. Weep not for me, Jesus says, weep for yourselves and for your children. Weep. Watch. Withstand.



*Matthew 27:55-61, Mark 15:40-47,
Luke 23:55, John 19:25 ~ Mary,
Mary Magdalene, Salome, Joanna*

The very women who served Jesus and His disciples in ministry now stand by, watching as Jesus is crucified. Agony.

They, and a few others, are there when Jesus is placed in the tomb. They notice how His body is laid. Having stood by Christ's side at His death, they are still present for His burial—a testimony of intense love and courageous dignity. When you're full of love and gratitude to Christ for what He's done for you, you are loyal to Christ and His body, no matter the circumstance.

*Matt. 28:1-8, Mark 16:9-11, Luke 24:1-11,
John 20:1-18 ~ Mary,
Mary Magdalene, Salome, Joanna*

The story isn't over for them, these women who witnessed Christ's gruesome death, His hasty burial. (John was the only male disciple at the crucifixion. Some believe that John 19:27 may indicate he took Mary home before Christ's death). These women are experiential eye-witnesses to every part of the gospel message—Christ's death, burial, and resurrection—in real time (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

When you combine the time line of the four gospels, here's how Easter Sunday morning progresses: Mary (mother of James), Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Joanna drag themselves to the garden-tomb, early in the morning, before sunrise. They carry more spices, hoping to properly prepare Jesus' body. Perhaps Mary Magdalene is the youngest and has more energy, in any event she scurries ahead, arriving before the others. She sees the empty grave but instead of going in, runs to tell Peter and John, "They've taken the Lord from the tomb and we don't know where He is!"

Meanwhile, Mary (mother of James), Salome, and Joanna arrive at the tomb and enter the grave. There, lo and behold, an angel tells them Jesus has risen. On their way back to tell the eleven, even more wondrously, Jesus meets them and says, "Good Morning! (Oh, yes, it was a good morning!! Isn't that the biggest understatement in the world!!)

Read Matthew 28:9-10 to learn three specific tasks Jesus gave to these three women.

♥ Write down His first command (vs. 9): _____ (Philippians 4:4 NKJV).

♥ Write down His second command (vs. 10): Do not _____ (Hebrews 13:6).



♡ His third command is to tell the men He is alive and will meet them in Galilee.

While this is going on, Peter and John run quickly to the tomb to verify Mary Magdalene's report. Their eyes tell them Jesus is not there, but they do not yet understand that He is alive (John 20:9).

Mary Magdalene returns to the garden after they have made their observation. She is weeping, believing Jesus' body to be stolen. Two angels ask why she is weeping. She answers, "They've taken my Lord away and I don't know where." That's when she turns and sees Jesus, supposes Him to be a gardener, and says, her words interrupted by sobs, "Sir if you have carried Him away, tell me where and I'll take Him away."

"Mary."

Imagine her heart's leap of awe, the thrill of utter joy that courses through her as she says, "Teacher."

"Don't cling to me. I haven't yet ascended, but go to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to My Father and Your Father, to my God and your God.'" Jesus assigns Mary Magdalene one task. She is to go to Christ's male disciples (brothers is gender specific) and tell them He will ascend alive to God (John 20:17).

And then Mary Magdalene rejoins the other women with the eleven, perhaps running in breathlessly as the other women are telling how He met them on the road. "I saw Him too!" So you have the women all together telling the disciples the news in Luke 24:9-10.

Today, more than ever, we must take as ours the responsibility Jesus gave these women—that is, to rejoice, to fear not, and to tell people that Jesus is alive. In no way does this contradict the Bible's consistent message of male headship in the home and church. Jesus' instruction to the women, "Go and tell the men I will be holding a pre-planned meeting with them in Galilee," helps clarify our submissive/helper role. The women were not to go to the men and say, "Where were you during the tough times of His death? I guess we are going to pick up the ball from here on." No! Mary is to speak the reassuring words, "Christ is going to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God." Just as Mary, Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Joanne, our lives must convey reassurance that Jesus lives! As modeled by these women, we are called to encourage, to build courage!

In this sin-cursed world, it is a temptation to correct men and point out their errors, but that's not what's needed. We sin, they sin, that's going to happen. Women of the Savior Jesus are women who encourage and assure that Jesus is alive!

In all our relationships, whether with men or women, we need to show that Jesus is alive and living in us. Since God said that day so long ago, "I will create a helpmeet" every woman created has the opportunity to help by declaring with her life that Jesus is alive. What is the most needed help? Gracious mercy through gospel interaction. What is gospel interaction? Jesus interacts the gospel to us through forgiveness, won by obediently submitting all the way to the cross. When we obediently confess our own sin and obediently forgive our sinners, that's gospel interaction.

Gospel interaction is what our world so desperately needs. Gospel interaction is what our marriages are dying for. Gospel interaction is what our homes and churches crave. Women of the Savior Jesus are women of mercy and grace. Be a woman who knows and extends Christ's mercy and grace, a woman whose life shouts loud that Jesus is alive.



Discussion Questions

Prior to your small group meeting, please answer the following questions. Choose one that you'd most like to discuss during your gathering. Also choose a second question in case your first preference is already taken.

1. In Mary's communication with Jesus (John 2:1-12), we noted that she stated the problem only one time, and then respectfully asked that Christ be obeyed. How would it look if this example were followed in relating with a person in authority, such as a husband, church leader, or employer? _____

2. As Jesus predicted in Matthew 10:21, 35-36, Mark 13:12, Luke 12:51-53, and Luke 21:16, have you encountered rejection by family members because of your devotion to Christ? How does Jesus encourage you in Luke 21:17-19? _____

Sometimes women focus on the emotional aspect of detachment from blood family, rather than on love for God that brings attachment with those who obey Him. In 1 Samuel 23:16, when David was enduring King Saul's hatred, Jonathan strengthened David in God. List some ways for women in the church to strengthen one another in God, to encourage perseverance in the face of hatred or rejection for Christ's sake: _____

3. Jesus said that those who do His will are those who love Him, and that those who do His will are His sisters. In Romans 8:29, we see that God works to conform those who love Him to be more like Jesus, who wants to be the first-born brother to many. Consider Romans 8:28 and Hebrews 12:11-13. What trials has God used in your life to help you do the will of God? _____

4. In Matthew 26:12-13 and Mark 14:9, Jesus says that Mary's washing of His feet will always be part of the gospel message. Women, precedent has been set for us! Jesus approves of our adoration of Him that evidences itself in acts of loving service. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, Paul compares his impartation of the gospel to a woman's nurturing ways. How could we women promote greater loving adoration of Jesus Christ through ways we serve His body? One obvious way is providing food for those in need. Write down at least three additional ways women who are forgiven might provide nurturing service to Christ's body. Discuss these and see what additional ideas your group can think of: _____

5. In Titus 2:4, what are the first two priorities for a Christ-loving married woman with children? ____

In Titus 2:3, what are the priorities for older women? _____

Read Mark 1:30-31. How do Peter's mother-in-law and Mary (as we've considered her conversation with Jesus at the wedding and her response to God regarding her pregnancy) provide examples of biblical women in action? _____

6. We've studied how Jesus gave women the amazing and undeserved privilege to be part of preparing His body, and to be present at His death, burial, and resurrection. Then we looked at how He commanded them to go and tell the disciples to wait for Him in Galilee – because Jesus would ascend to His Father and theirs, His God and theirs. Women are created to help (Genesis 2:18) and support (remember Jesus does not tell Martha to build the church on her profession of faith, He gives Peter that job). Write down ways you are tempted to lead instead of encourage leadership by your submission (Ephesians 5:22-24). Discuss these and give the women in your group a chance to share their temptations to lead. _____

Humbly-Serve Prayer Requests

Rather than prayer for others in need, within your group please ask prayer for your own growth as a woman. Choose one of the suggestions below:

1. Pray that I will not nag, but state a problem only one time and then show respect to the person whose authority I am under, by accepting the solution presented.
2. Pray that I will be thankful and not upset when I am separated from my family for Christ's sake.
3. Pray for my eyes to be opened, so I can see how God wants to change me by trials in my life.
4. Pray that I will begin to lovingly adore Christ by _____.
5. Pray that I will be quick to embrace whatever God allows into my life, and quick to serve whenever opportunity arises.
6. Pray that I will be a follower who submissively shows that Christ is alive in and at work in me by _____.
7. Other: _____



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Some photos are, with permission, by Ann Voskamp, who is a farmer's wife, homeschooling mama to six, and the author of the New York Times Bestseller, *One Thousand Gifts: A Dare to Live FULLY Right where You Are*. She blogs daily at www.annvoskamp.com.