

# WOMEN WHO MET JESUS

## NEW TESTAMENT STORIES OF FAITH

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## INTRODUCTION

Every week we will look at several Scriptures in the Gospels. We'll read the stories of women who met Jesus, and we will consider simple discussion questions. These questions are designed to help us put ourselves into the stories, to think about what the women were experiencing. We'll define a few details to help us understand a little bit about the culture in which they lived.

Next, we will meditate on the Scriptures, using specific questions that can be utilized with many different Scripture passages. The goal is to find treasures to ponder in our hearts: treasures about Jesus and how he changed lives.

After looking at the women's stories, we'll think about how they knew Jesus. Was he their long-awaited Redeemer? Was he their Friend or Rabbi? And while we reflect on this, we will think about what it means to know and draw near to Jesus in our own lives.

Unless otherwise noted, the Scriptures quoted in this study are from the CSB version.

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# WEEK 1. MARY OF NAZARETH

This week's material is designed to do together in an in-person class. If you are joining a Zoom meeting, please work through the Week 1 material before the meeting if possible. In the remaining weeks, you will have about five days of devotional materials per week.

## READ ABOUT MARY

Read Luke 1:26-38.

Look at the angel's greeting to Mary. How might you phrase this in modern everyday language?

What was Mary's first reaction to the angel (verse 29)?

What did the angel say about Mary's baby?

What did the angel say about Mary?

Read Luke 2:1-7.

This is such a familiar story. What detail(s) would surprise you if this were the very first time you were reading about how God came to earth?

Read Luke 2:41-52.

How did Mary refer to Joseph when they found Jesus? What do you think this says about the relationship the three of them had?

What do you think Mary and Joseph did not understand in verse 50?

What “things” do you think Mary kept in her heart in verse 51?

Acts 1:14 gives us our last glimpse of Mary in the Bible. What does this verse tell us about Mary?

## DETAILS

*Jesus:* Luke 1:31. A common name in this era, Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name “Joshua,” which means “God is salvation.”

*“The power of the Most High will overshadow you”:* Luke 1:35. This “overshadowing” is the same word used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament for the way the Spirit hovered over Creation in the beginning. (See Genesis 1:2)

*registered:* Luke 2:1. The Roman government required the residents of their provinces (such as Israel) to report every fourteen years for a tax census. Because people and local leaders tended to resist this process, the census sometimes took several years to complete.

*sitting among the teachers:* Luke 2:46. When rabbis discussed theology in the temple courts, men could sit with them and ask them questions.

Sources: I found many of these details in the notes in my CSB Life Connections Study Bible. For a complete list of the resources I used, check the Appendix.



## MEDITATE

Every week in the “Meditate” sections, we will slow down and ask God to show us what we can learn from each character and their story in the Scriptures. Check the Appendix for Scriptures to use as you begin a time of meditation.

We will be using the following set of four questions as we ponder each woman we study. We will not always find an answer for every question. For example, the Bible doesn’t tell us every character’s faults.

What do you admire about Mary?

What faults did you see in Mary?

(This is a simple question. This class is not diving into the different ideas about Mary that various branches of the faith teach. We are just looking at the Scriptures and asking, with each woman we study, “Do the Scriptures show us any of her faults?”)

How did Jesus change Mary’s life?

How would you title a chapter on Mary in a book?



You can take each of these questions and make them personal. As you see admirable qualities in the women we study, you can ask the Lord to plant those same qualities in you. As you see faults, you can ask the Lord to deliver you from those faults. Every week, you can thank Jesus for the way he has changed your life. Or you can talk to him about changes that perhaps have not been pleasant. You can ask him to continue to shape your own story. These questions are very simple, but they can be valuable tools as we meditate on Scripture.

# IMMANUEL

*...The angel came to her and said,  
“Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you.” (Luke 1:28)  
...They will name him Immanuel,  
which is translated, “God is with us.” (Matthew 1:23)*

Bible characters are interesting, but the goal of Bible study is to spend time with Jesus and get to know him. With this in mind, we will look at a name or title of Jesus every week.

Mary experienced Jesus as Immanuel—“God with us”—in a very unique way. She not only gave birth to him, but she (and Joseph) cared for him and shared their home with him.

Jesus came to our world to be “God with us” – to show us what God is like, and to give his life for us. As you read these verses, underline the phrases that are meaningful to you.

*Lord, you have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I stand up;  
you understand my thoughts from far away.  
You observe my travels and my rest;  
you are aware of all my ways.  
Before a word is on my tongue,  
you know all about it, Lord.  
You have encircled me;  
you have placed your hand on me.  
This wondrous knowledge is beyond me. (Psalm 139:1-6)  
God is our refuge and strength [mighty and impenetrable],  
A very present and well-proved help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1 Amplified)  
If I fly on the wings of the dawn  
and settle down on the western horizon,  
even there your hand will lead me;  
your right hand will hold on to me.  
If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me,  
and the light around me will be night”—  
even the darkness is not dark to you.  
The night shines like the day;  
darkness and light are alike to you. (Psalm 139:9-12)  
For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor  
things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to  
separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)  
...Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)  
I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer  
see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too. On that day you will know that I  
am in my Father, you are in me, and I am in you. (John 14:18)  
I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with  
all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God’s love, and to know  
Christ’s love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

*Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:17-21)*

## PRAY

Look back at the phrases you underlined. How can you use them as you pray today?

## SUMMARIZING TODAY

It was interesting to me to see that although Mary didn't understand some things about God's plan, she pondered everything that had happened. She treasured the messages from God, and the experience of raising the Messiah. I was encouraged to think that I can dwell on God's word, and make it part of my life, even when I don't understand every detail. I can embrace the fact that some things will remain mysteries because I worship a God who makes the impossible possible.

*...Nothing will be impossible with God. (Luke 2:37)*

*...Jesus said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God, because all things are possible with God." (Mark 10:27)*

This "summarizing" space contains what I learned from each woman or how the Name of Jesus encouraged me. These are simple personal treasures that were relevant to me. I am sure you will find entirely different insights. Maybe you will think of songs that illustrate a name of Jesus, or you might hear a verse at church that goes along with the reading. Jot down the lessons you are learning or the ways you are applying your study.

## WEEK 2. ELIZABETH & ANNA

### DAY 1: READ ABOUT ELIZABETH

Read Luke 1:5-25, Luke 1:39-45, Luke 1:57-80. If you have time, read all of Luke 1, but the verses specified here will tell you Elizabeth's story.

What did Luke 1:6-7 tell you about Elizabeth and her husband?

Why do you think Elizabeth stayed in seclusion for five months?

What is the focus of Elizabeth's words in Luke 1:45—her own blessings or Mary's blessings?

What does Luke 1:58 tell us about why the neighbors rejoiced?

When have you rejoiced over someone else's blessing?

God changed Elizabeth's life from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

God has changed my life from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

Think about this statement for a few minutes. Maybe you gave your life to him many years ago, and you had several great years with God, but now you're in a dark season. Or perhaps the Lord has given a small rescue lately—from an illness or an accident that didn't quite happen. Ponder this and talk to the Lord about changes in your life. He wants to hear your voice, whether you are praising him, or crying out for help.

**Important:** When we discuss these pages in class, there will never be any pressure to share your answers to the most personal questions. We realize that some of your conversations with God are very private.

## DETAILS

*righteous in God's sight:* Luke 1:5 does not imply that Elizabeth and her husband were perfect. Keeping the law included offering sacrifices for sins committed.

*incense:* Luke 1:9. While the priest was praying and burning the evening incense inside the temple, people would gather for public silent prayer outside.

*the spirit and power of Elijah:* Luke 1:17. Elijah was one of the first great Old Testament prophets. Malachi (the last Old Testament prophet) foretold Elijah's return to prepare the nation for the Messiah. Jewish tradition expected that Elijah would literally return, but the angel said John would have the "spirit and power of Elijah"—the same inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

*my disgrace among the people:* Luke 1:25. In this culture, infertility was seen as a disgrace, a result of sin. Yet the Bible assures us that Elizabeth and Zechariah were godly people.

## DAY 2: MEDITATE

Ask the Lord to show you his truth today. The Appendix has a page of suggested Scriptures to pray as you begin.

### LEARNING FROM ELIZABETH

Read Luke 1:39-45, in two different versions if possible. Remember, we may not find an answer to every question. Meditating involves taking your time with a passage and really thinking about it, so don't rush through these simple questions.

What do you admire about Elizabeth?

What faults did you see in Elizabeth?

How did God change Elizabeth's life?

How would you title a chapter on Elizabeth in a book?



## PRAY

*Blessed is she who believed that the Lord would fulfill what he has spoken to her. (Luke 1:45)*

## DAY 3: READ ABOUT ANNA

Read Luke 2:21-38.

We know so little about Anna! What details does the Scripture give us?

According to Luke 2, how did Anna serve God?

Simeon is an important part of this story. What do his prophetic words tell us about Jesus?

How do you think Anna recognized Jesus?

How can you become more aware of Jesus' presence in your life?

Who do you admire as a dedicated woman of God within your acquaintances?

### DETAILS

*Jewish rituals:* Luke 2 shows us three rituals that were required after the birth of a firstborn son. First, male babies were circumcised when they were eight days old. (Leviticus 12:3). Secondly, women were “purified” after they gave birth. Women were ritually unclean (forbidden to participate in religious services) for a specific time after a birth. From a woman’s point of view, I suggest that this gave the new mother time to heal, and a good reason to keep baby home for a few weeks. When mothers reentered the rhythm of Jewish religious life, they would offer a sacrifice: a lamb—unless the woman was poor, in which case she could bring two doves or pigeons. Thirdly, families were required to “redeem” their firstborn sons. This special offering was a reminder that God had protected the firstborn on the night of Passover in Egypt. (Exodus 13:1-16.) It is this redemption of the firstborn that brought Joseph, Mary, and Jesus to the temple where they met Simeon and Anna.

*the temple courts:* Herod the Great ordered this temple to be built for the Jews. It consisted of four courts. First, there was the outer court—the Court of the Gentiles, the only place where non-Jews were allowed. Next was the Women’s Court, where both men and women were welcome. The third court was the Court of Israel, open to all Jewish men. The fourth court was the Court of the Priests, which only the priests could enter.

## DAY 4: MEDITATE

Begin with prayer. Ask the Lord to show you how to apply his word today.

### LEARNING FROM ANNA

Read Luke 2:25-38.

What do you admire about Anna?

What faults did you see in Anna?

How did God change Anna's life?

How would you title a chapter on Anna in a book?



Next week we will continue using the above questions, but we will add a few questions that focus on Jesus.

## PRAY

*...[Anna] began to thank God and to speak about him  
to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:38)  
...My eyes have seen your salvation.  
You have prepared it in the presence of all the peoples—  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles  
and glory to your people Israel. (Luke 2:30-32)*

## DAY 5: JESUS OUR REDEEMER

*Blessed is the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited  
and provided redemption for his people. (Luke 1:68)  
...looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:38)*

I saw the word *redemption* in the Scriptures as we read about Elizabeth and Anna: according to the dictionary, to redeem something is to “gain or regain possession of (something) in exchange for payment.”

In the Old Testament, the Jewish people praised God for redeeming them from Egypt and rescuing them from slavery. Thus, their concept of a redeemer involved rescue from oppression. It’s not surprising that the New Testament Jews who were looked forward to the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2:38) expected a political Messiah. Instead, Jesus came to provide freedom from sin.

What do these Scriptures tell you about the character and actions of the Lord your Redeemer?

Deuteronomy 7:8

Psalm 78:35

Psalm 130:7-8

Isaiah 48:17

Isaiah 63:9

Ephesians 1:7-8

I Peter 1:18-19

What do these Scriptures tell you about living as a redeemed person?

Psalm 19:14

Psalm 71:23

Colossians 1:9-14

Titus 2:11-14

## PRAY

Look back at the phrases you wrote on the last two pages—phrases that describe Jesus the Redeemer, or your desire to live as a redeemed child of God. String a few phrases together into a prayer.

## SUMMARIZING THE WEEK

I was fascinated by the way Elizabeth rejoiced with Mary, and, later, Elizabeth's neighbors rejoiced with her. I wondered how many of those same neighbors had added to their families during Elizabeth's years of infertility. Did she rejoice with them? Did any of them grieve with her while she was unable to have a child?

I remembered the New Testament phrase "rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep." I found it in Romans 12, surrounded by instructions of how to have fellowship with others. I also thought of Psalm 34:3, which encourages us to praise the Lord together.

*Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud; instead, associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own estimation. (Romans 12:15-16)*

*Come, let us tell of the Lord's greatness; let us exalt his name together. (Psalm 34:3 NLT)*

I've included Scriptures from other parts of the Bible in this section, because I want to be sure that my thoughts on the Scriptures reflect the truth of the Scriptures.

How would you summarize the week? What was meaningful to you?

## WEEK 3. THE SAMARITAN WOMAN & THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN

### DAY 1: READ ABOUT THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Read John 4:1-42.

What emotions do you think the woman was feeling as the conversation progressed?

What do you think might have been the woman's deepest longing?

How do people today try to fill their deepest longings?

In verses 25-26, Jesus acknowledged that he was the Messiah. This is the first recorded situation in which he did this. List all the reasons why someone in the Jewish culture of the time would expect this woman to be at the bottom of the list of People The Messiah Will Talk To.

What was the woman's reaction when she realized who Jesus was?

What keeps us from talking about Jesus?

### DETAILS

*Samaria:* John 4:1. The Jews looked down on the people of this area because they were a mixed race—descended from Jews who married pagan people. Strict Jews would avoid traveling through this area because they considered it unclean.

*the well at noon:* John 4:6. Several commentaries suggest that most women would visit the well early in the morning. Others state that evening was the most popular time. Everyone seems to agree that no one went to the well in the midday heat. This woman may have been avoiding social interaction with other women.

*living water*: This phrase described flowing fresh water from a river or a spring, instead of water that was standing in a well.

*five husbands*: John 4:18. The Scripture doesn't give us any details on why these divorces happened, but women in this culture could not initiate a divorce.

## DAY 2: MEDITATE

Ask the Lord to open his word to you today. The Appendix has a page of verses to choose from as you begin to meditate.

### LEARNING FROM THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Read John 4:1-42. If possible, read this in a different version from the one you read previously.

What do you admire about this woman?

What faults do you see in her life?

How did Jesus change her life?

How would you title a chapter about the Samaritan Woman in a book?



## FOCUS ON JESUS

These three questions are my favorite Bible study tools. They make me slow down and look at the passage again. And then they lead me right into prayer.

What did this story tell you about Jesus' character?

What did this story tell you about how Jesus interacts with people?

After reading this story, how will you respond to Jesus?  
(This may be a prayer, an action, or a simple "Thank you.")

## PRAY

Look at your answers to the last three questions. Now put them into prayer. You might use phrases like these:

"Lord, I see that you are..."

"Lord, thank you that you..."

"Lord, you are calling me to respond by..."

## DAY 3: READ ABOUT THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN

Read Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30.

How did the woman address Jesus? What titles did she give him?

How did the disciples respond to the woman?

Jesus' words seem harsh at first reading, but the woman seems to have heard them in a compassionate tone. Read them again and imagine Jesus with a twinkle in his eye. Was he making a comment on the views of his culture?

How do you think the disciples felt when Jesus healed the daughter?

### DETAILS

*comparing Matthew and Mark:* Matthew wrote his book to a Jewish audience. Mark wrote to Gentiles. Notice that Matthew called the woman simply a “Canaanite,” while Mark was more specific.

*dogs:* Matthew 15:26. When the Jews referred to Gentiles, they used a word that described wild dogs. But the woman used a word for a pet dog.

*a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth:* Mark 7:26. A Gentile is simply a non-Jew. She came from the area of Phoenicia (now Lebanon), which was under the control of Syria.

*first:* Mark 7:27. by using the word “first,” Jesus gave us a hint that he did not come only for the Jewish people. His in person ministry was focused in Israel, but his disciples would spread his message outside their borders.

*crumbs:* Mark 7:28. The woman was not insulted by Jesus' metaphor comparing Gentiles to dogs. Instead, she made a comparison of her own. I love to imagine this conversation taking place with a raised eyebrow, or sarcastically shrugged shoulders—two people with great senses of humor having a conversation.

## DAY 4: MEDITATE

Begin with prayer, asking God to speak to you today. Read one or both of the Scripture passages from yesterday.

### LEARNING FROM THE SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN



What do you admire about the Syrophenician Woman?

What faults did you see in her?

How did Jesus change her life?

How would you title a chapter on this woman in a book?

### FOCUS ON JESUS

What did this story tell you about Jesus' character?

What did this story tell you about how Jesus interacts with people?

After reading this story, how will you respond to Jesus?

### PRAY

Look at your answers as you focused on Jesus. Now put these into prayers.

“Lord, I see that you...”

“Lord, thank you that you...”

“Lord, you are calling me to respond by...”

## DAY 5: THE AUTHOR & FINISHER OF OUR FAITH

*O Lord my God, you have performed many wonders for us.  
Your plans for us are too numerous to list.  
You have no equal.  
If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds,  
I would never come to the end of them. (Isaiah 40:5 NLT)*

As I studied this week's characters, I realized how little we know about them. I thought of this verse, and it seemed fitting. We don't need all the details. We can trust the Author to finish the story.

I am really treasuring the idea of Jesus as the Author and Finisher of my faith. I'm writing in the middle of the 2020 pandemic, wondering how the Lord is going to provide for our financial needs. I find peace in knowing that he knows the rest of the story.

*Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2 NKJV)*

I learned the verse in the New King James Version. Other versions give us a few more details on the concept.

*Keeping our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:2 CSB)*

*We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God's throne. (Hebrews 12:2 NLT)*

*[Looking away from all that will distract us and] focusing our eyes on Jesus, who is the Author and Perfecter of faith [the first incentive for our belief and the One who brings our faith to maturity], who for the joy [of accomplishing the goal] set before Him endured the cross, disregarding the shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God [revealing His deity, His authority, and the completion of His work]. (Hebrews 12:3 Amplified)*

Jesus is

the pioneer and perfecter of our faith  
the champion who initiates and perfects our faith  
the Author and Perfecter of faith

Look at Hebrews 12:1-3 to see the verses that surround the description of Jesus as the Author and Finisher of our Faith. What do these verses encourage you to do?

What do these verses tell you about the Author and Finisher of our faith? What does he promise?  
Psalm 139:16

I Corinthians 1:7-8

Ephesians 2:10

I Thessalonians 5:23-24

Philippians 1:6

Revelation 22:13

PRAY

Look back at the phrases you wrote down. String them together into a prayer.

## SUMMARIZING THE WEEK

The Samaritan woman ran into the middle of town and told everyone that she had met someone who just might be the Messiah. This is fascinating because men and women did not interact with the freedom they have today. Women didn't simply rush into a public place and proclaim things to groups of men. Yet this woman was already outside the bounds of what her society thought was appropriate. She didn't care about that. In this way, she was uniquely able to proclaim her news about the Messiah. God used her, not in spite of her past, but because of it.

This is the biggest lesson I see in this story. If we give our pasts, our backgrounds, our failures, our current situations to Jesus, he can use us. He may urge us to make new and different choices in our new lives, but the past does not disqualify us from serving him.

*For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10)*

*For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift— not from works, so that no one can boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10)*

What did you learn this week? What truths encouraged you?

## WEEK 4. MARTHA & MARY OF BETHANY

### DAY 1: READ ABOUT MARTHA

Read Luke 10:38-42.

In whose home did this story take place?

What do you see as a positive characteristic of Martha?

Was Martha always preoccupied with household tasks, or was she just having a bad day here? Luke 10:39 says that Mary “also sat at the Lord’s feet.” Could this mean that Martha was usually there too?

Read Jesus’ words carefully. Did he criticize Martha for taking care of household tasks?

If you were a character in this story, which one would fit your personality best?

Read John 11:1-44.

What did you learn about Martha and her faith from this passage?

## DETAILS

**Martha's name:** Martha's name comes from the feminine version of a Chaldean or Syrian word *moro*, which means "lord" or "master." *All the Women of the Bible* states that the Greek word *kyria*, translated "lady" in 2 John 1 is the Greek equivalent of this word. If so, perhaps the lady John wrote to was Martha of Bethany.

**her home:** Luke 10:38. Why did Martha own the home? I wish we had more details. Some commentators suggest that she was a widow whose siblings joined her after her husband died.

**at Jesus' feet:** Luke 10:39. This phrase is used of the students of a rabbi. It was truly shocking and counter-cultural that Jesus welcomed women to learn from him in this way.

**Martha's many tasks:** Luke 10:40. In the culture of the time, women's and men's tasks were more rigidly defined than they are now. Martha had every reason to expect her sister's help.

**Martha's faith:** John 11:27. What do these titles mean?

- the Christ: the Messiah, the King
- the Son of God: this phrase shows her belief that Jesus is more than a man—he is God
- who comes into the world: the One the Jews were waiting for, the one the prophets had foretold

**Jesus wept:** John 11:35. Weeping loudly at a funeral was common. Mourners expressed grief vividly.

## DAY 2: MEDITATE ON THE WORD

Begin your time with prayer, asking the Lord's guidance.

### LEARNING FROM MARTHA

What do you admire about Martha?

What faults did you see in Martha?

How did Jesus change Martha's life?

How would you title a chapter on Martha in a book?



## COLORFUL MEDITATION

Choose either Luke 10:38-42 or John 11.

Grab a few colored pens or pencils, and use them while you pray. Don't panic. This isn't art. It's prayer. You might write a phrase or two in big colorful letters, and doodle around them while you pray. Or you could draw stick figures to illustrate the scene. Maybe you just want to use colors and shapes to express your mood while you pray. This can be a valuable meditation method because it keeps your hands busy and your mind focused while you spend more time with God's Word.

## DAY 3. READ ABOUT MARY OF BETHANY

Read Luke 10:38-42. Imagine that you have an important guest. Where are you focusing your time and energy: hospitality or listening to the guest?

Read John 11:32-44.

What did Mary say to Jesus after her brother's death?

How did Jesus respond to Mary's grief?

The Bible doesn't tell us how Mary (or Martha either) reacted when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. How do you imagine the sisters responded?

Read John 12:1-8.

How would you describe Mary's gift to Jesus?

Do you know anyone who gives extravagantly? This might include giving amazing gift-giving, sacrificially contributing, or selflessly volunteering. What do you admire about this person?

### DETAILS

*nard*: John 12:3. This expensive fragrant ointment was imported from India. It was stored in sealed alabaster jars, and wealthy home owners would use it to anoint special guests.

## DAY 4: MEDITATE

Begin with prayer.

### LEARNING FROM MARY

What do you admire about Mary of Bethany?

What faults did you see in Mary?

How did Jesus change Mary's life?

How would you title a chapter on Mary in a book?



### COLORFUL MEDITATION

Choose John 11:32-44 or John 12:1-8. Grab a few colored pens or pencils, and use them while you pray. You might write a phrase or two in big colorful letters, and doodle around them while you pray. Or you could draw stick figures to illustrate the scene. Maybe you just want to use colors and shapes to express your mood while you pray. This can be a valuable meditation method because it keeps your hands busy and your mind focused while you spend more time with God's Word.

## DAY 5: JESUS, OUR FRIEND

As I read about Mary and Martha, I saw that Jesus valued their friendship. What do these Scriptures tell you about Jesus as a friend?

Luke 5:17-20

John 15:13-15

John 21:4-7

James 2:20-24

What would you add to this list of Scriptures? Where in the Gospel stories do you see Jesus being a friend?

### PRAY

What do you want to talk about as you interact with your Friend today?

### SUMMARIZING THE WEEK

This week I am thinking of the Lord Jesus as a friend. Sometimes I get caught up in guilt for missing a day or two of Bible study, but when I remember that it is an activity in which I meet my friend, it is easy to return to it.

*My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."  
And my heart responds, "Lord, I am coming." (Psalm 27:8 NLT)  
Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you...(James 4:8)*

## WEEK 5. WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED JESUS

### DAY 1: READ ABOUT THE WOMEN

Read Luke 8:1-3. Jesus and his ministry were supported by several women. Notice what Luke tells us about Joanna's husband. Think about the various disciples and their backgrounds (fishermen, a tax collector who worked for the government, a zealot who wanted to overthrow the government), and add the few details we know about these women. I would not expect these very different people to interact, much less to travel together and become a team of missionaries! What made their fellowship possible?

Mark 15:41 tells us that women followed Jesus and cared for him. What needs do you think a traveling rabbi and his disciples would have?

Many of the people Jesus healed responded with thanks and praise, but these women thanked him with more than just words. How might a modern Christian put this "thanking with more than words" into practice?

Read Matthew 20:20-24. Many (though not all) scholars believe that the mother of Zebedee's sons was Salome, Mary of Nazareth's sister. Write down your first impressions of this woman.

What was Salome's posture in Matthew 20:20?

What did Salome want in Matthew 20? Do you think she was thinking primarily of her sons or herself when she made this request?

Read Matthew 19:28, and then read Matthew 20:26-28 again. What had Jesus told the disciples to expect in his kingdom?

Do you think Salome had an earthly kingdom or a heavenly kingdom in mind?

If Salome was Jesus' aunt, does the family connection make her request more understandable?

How did Jesus respond? Did he criticize Salome for making this request?

Read Luke 23:55-24:12.

Jesus' male disciples were hiding for fear that they, too, would be arrested and perhaps even executed. The women may have faced less risk simply because they were women—and not viewed as a threat to the government. But think again about Joanna's husband; would you expect Joanna to show up at the cross? Why or why not?

Why do you think the disciples didn't believe what the women said? Do you think you would have believed them?

## DETAILS

*women who supported Jesus:* (Luke 8:3) Michael Card's commentary on Luke pointed out that it was not unusual for wealthy women to support a rabbi. What was unique about Jesus and his ministry was that the women actually traveled with Jesus.

*women at the cross and the tomb:* Each Gospel book gives us a slightly different list of women who came to the cross, and the tomb. Read Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40, Luke 23:49, and John 19:25 and write down the women who are mentioned.

## DAY 2: MEDITATE

Begin with a prayer asking the Lord to open his word to you.

### LEARNING FROM THE WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED JESUS

Read Luke 8:1-3 and Luke 23:55-24:12.

What do you admire about these women?

What faults do you see in the lives of these women?

How did Jesus change their lives?

How would you title a chapter on these women in a book?

### LISTEN TO JESUS

When I use these three questions, I read the Scriptures several times, slowly, and prayerfully, before asking myself the questions.

What word or phrase caught your attention when you read the Scripture today?

Why is this word or phrase relevant to you right now?

Respond to the Scriptures. What do you want to talk to Jesus about today? This might be a praise or a prayer, questions or confidence.

## DAY 3: READ ABOUT MARY MAGDALENE

Today we are going to focus on the events just before and after the Resurrection. But first, let's get a little background on Mary Magdalene: Read Luke 8:1-3. What do we learn about her from these verses?

As you read today, notice that there is no mention of Mary Magdalene being a prostitute. Some teachers have confused her with the sinful woman in Luke 7:37.

Read Mark 15:33-47.

Why do you think the women came to the cross? What would make you attend a gruesome event like this?

Jesus had delivered Mary from a life in bondage to evil. What might have frightened her as she faced a life without Jesus?

Read John 20:1-16.

What did Mary assume had happened to Jesus? Why was it hard for everyone to realize his resurrection?

What made Mary recognize Jesus?

Who would you have expected Jesus to appear to first?

## DAY 4: MEDITATE

Begin with prayer. Ask the Lord to show you what you can learn from his word today. Read Luke 8:1-3, Mark 15:33-47, and John 20:1-16.

### LEARNING FROM MARY MAGDALENE

What do you admire about Mary?

What faults did you see in Mary?

How did Jesus change Mary's life?

How would you title a chapter on Mary Magdalene in a book?



### LISTEN TO JESUS

What word or phrase caught your attention when you read the Scripture today?

Why is this word or phrase relevant to you right now?

Respond to the Scriptures. What do you want to talk to Jesus about today? This might be a praise or a prayer, questions or confidence.

## DAY 5: RABBI

*Jesus said to her, "Mary."*

*Turning around, she said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!"—which means "Teacher."  
(John 20:16)*

*Rabboni* means "my rabbi." A rabbi was a man who studied, interpreted, and taught the Old Testament Scriptures. Some rabbis had practical jobs like carpentering or blacksmithing. They might work at these trades seasonally and travel during the months when they didn't have as much work. Rabbis taught in the synagogues as well as outdoors in vineyards and fields. Men who wanted to become disciples of a rabbi would often live in his house or travel with him, doing unpaid tasks for him or assisting in his occupation. The goal was to spend so much time with him that they not only learned his teaching but became like him. (I highly recommend the book *Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus* if you want to know more on this subject.)

What do these verses tell you about following Rabbi Jesus and what he commands?

Matthew 7:24-29

Matthew 11:28-30

Matthew 19:16-21

Matthew 22:36-40

Philippians 2:1-4

Philippians 2:5-11

2 Timothy 3:16

## PRAY

As you follow Jesus in your everyday life, what is he calling you to do or to keep doing or to change?

Think about the names of Jesus we have studied. Which one brings you comfort today? Look back at the notes you took about that specific name. Use a Scripture about that name as you pray.



## SUMMARIZING THE WEEK AND THE STUDY

I kept thinking about the varying backgrounds of the people who traveled with Jesus. I thought of my own valued friends who are so different from me, and I praised God for the fellowship that he gives us.

*God is faithful; you were called by him into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
(I Corinthians 1:9)  
All of you be like-minded and sympathetic, love one another, and be compassionate and humble. (I Peter 3:8)*

What have you pondered this week?

Who was your favorite of the women we studied?

Which woman did you find it easiest to identify with?

Which woman's story made you wish you had a few more details?

Which of the meditation methods did you find most useful?  
Check the Appendix to remember each of them.

# APPENDIX

## MEDITATION PATTERNS

### WEEK 1 & 2: LEARNING FROM A CHARACTER

What do you admire about this person?

What faults did you see in this person?

How did Jesus change this person's life?

How would you title a chapter on this person in a book?

(Remember, you may not find an answer for each question for every character. Some Bible people have no admirable qualities, while there are others whose faults we do not know.)

### WEEK 3. FOCUS ON JESUS

What did this story tell you about Jesus' character?

What did this story tell you about how Jesus interacts with people?

After reading this story, how will you respond to Jesus?

### WEEK 4. COLORFUL MEDITATION

Grab a few colored pens or pencils, and use them while you pray. You might write a phrase or two in big colorful letters, and doodle around it while you pray. Or you could draw stick figures to illustrate the scene. Maybe you just want to use colors and shapes to express your mood while you pray. This can be a valuable meditation method because it keeps your hands busy and your mind focused while you spend more time with God's Word.

## WEEK 5. LISTEN TO JESUS

What word or phrase caught your attention when you read the Scripture today?

Why is this word or phrase relevant to you right now?

Respond to the Scriptures. What do you want to talk to Jesus about today? This might be a praise or a prayer, questions or confidence.

## OTHER IDEAS FOR MEDITATION

1. Imagine the scene. Think through your five senses, one at a time, and imagine what you might be experiencing if you were present. Think about which character you identify with most.
2. Comparing translations. This is easy. Go to [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com) and read the passage in different translations. I like to compare these: ESV, CSB, NLT, and Amplified.
3. Compare the gospels to each other. For this you will need a Harmony of the Gospels. This is a chart that shows you each story in that gospels and where it might be mentioned in the other gospel books: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Some study Bibles contain a Harmony of the Gospels, but if you don't have one, you can find one online. For example, Blue Letter Bible has one here: <https://www.blueletterbible.org/study/harmony/index.cfm>
4. Use the word SPACE to ask yourself questions about the passage.  
S: Did this passage make me aware of a sin to confess?  
P: Did this passage give me a promise to claim?  
A: Did this passage show me an attitude to cultivate or avoid?  
C: Did this passage give me a command to follow?  
E: Did this passage show me an example to follow or avoid?
5. Use the SOAP method:  
**S**cripture, **O**bservation, **A**pplication, **P**rayer  
Read the passage of Scripture. Choose a verse or two to write.  
Observe the who what, when, where, why and how of the situation  
Think about how you can apply this Scripture to your life.  
Pray about it.

## SCRIPTURES TO USE AS YOU BEGIN A TIME OF MEDITATION

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, Lord, my rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)*

*Make your ways known to me, Lord;  
teach me your paths.  
Guide me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
I wait for you all day long. (Psalm 25:4-5)*

*I have treasured your word in my heart  
so that I may not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)*

*Open my eyes so that I may contemplate  
wondrous things from your instruction. (Psalm 119:18)*

*My life is down in the dust; give me life through your word.  
I told you about my life, and you answered me;  
teach me your statutes. (Psalm 119:25-26)*

*You are my shelter and my shield; I put my hope in your word. (Psalm 119:114)*

*I wait for the Lord; I wait and put my hope in his word. (Psalm 130:5)*

*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. (Mark 13:31)*

*“Lord,” answered Simon Peter, “who else should we go to? Your words have the ring of eternal life! And we believe and are convinced that you are the holy one of God.”  
(John 6:68 Phillips)*

*Jesus answered, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” (John 14:23)*

*Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. (Colossians 3:16)*

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16)*

*But be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (James 1:22)*

*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you...(James 4:8)*

## RESOURCES

*All the Women of the Bible*, accessed through [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com)  
The *BE* series of commentaries on the Gospels, by Warren Wiersbe  
*ESV Study Bible*  
*Life Application Study Bible, NLT*  
*Life Connections Study Bible, CSV*  
*Matthew: The Gospel of Identity*, by Michael Card  
*Mark: The Gospel of Passion*, by Michael Card  
*Luke: The Gospel of Amazement*, by Michael Card  
*The Parable of Joy: Reflections on the Wisdom of the Book of John*, by Michael Card  
*Moments with the Savior: A Devotional Life of Christ*, by Ken Gire  
*Praying the Names of Jesus*, by Ann Spangler  
*Praying Through the Names of Jesus*, by Tony Evans  
*Sitting at the Feet of Rabbi Jesus*, by Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg  
*Women of the Bible: 52 Bible Studies for Individuals and Groups*, by Jean E. Syswerda  
*Women of the Bible: A One Year Devotional Study*, by Ann Spangler and Jean E. Syswerda  
Online dictionary at [lexico.com](http://lexico.com)

If you enjoyed this study, check out these books at Amazon:

*Luke: The Path of Peace*, by Ruth J. Leamy with Mark J. Leamy

*Beachcombing the Psalms: Simple Exercises to Enrich Your Prayer Life*, by Ruth J. Leamy with Mark J. Leamy

