

# You Are....

Come as you are. It's as simple as that. For the next 21 days, we are going to look at women in the Bible who came as they were. God used each one of them to teach us valuable lessons about who HE IS in relation to us. As their stories from the Old Testament and the New Testament unfold, if you are honest with yourself, you might see yourself in them. I hope that in the pages of Scripture, you find out who YOU ARE in relation to the one and only, Almighty God and how these stories all point to Jesus.

### You are loved by your Creator – John 3:16-17

Out of his abundant love for us, God created us to have relationship with him. We start these devotions with Eve, Sarah, Rahab, Ruth, and Mary each having a story showing God's love for them. From the Garden of Eden to the birth of our Savior, God shows how much he loves all creation and the world.

### Day 1: Eve, Smage Bearer

- Read Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 3.

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)

<sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. <sup>8</sup> Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

Genesis 3:6-8 (NIV)



When we read the story of Eve, she comes across to some as quite the villain or to others as a victim. Through the serpent's deception, sin resulted in a curse on all creation. But we learn from Scripture that Eve is an image bearer of the Creator, just like us. She is HIS creation, not man's. In fact, Scripture uses the words "Us" and "Our" to indicate that we are made in the image of God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. God does not abandon her or all mankind after the Fall, but rather seeks her and Adam and begins to set his plan in place for restoring our broken relationship with him. And that plan involves Jesus.

Questions: Do you think of Eve as a villain or a victim? Why? Do you see yourself as an image bearer of the Creator? Why might this be difficult for you? What does it say about God that he sought Eve & Adam immediately after their disobedience? Do you see God pursuing mankind to restore relationship with him? Have you experienced God pursuing you?

**Prayer:** Father, you are the Creator of all things in Heaven and on Earth. We tried to mess up your perfect plan, but you are in the restoration business. Thank you for seeking me out and setting a plan in place so that I can have a relationship with you through your Son, Jesus. Thank you for loving me that much. In the loving name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



### Day 2: Sarah, True Joy

- Read Genesis 12: 1-4; Genesis 17 and 18 and 21:1-7

The Call of Abram

<sup>12</sup> The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

2 "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you;I will make your name great,

will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

<sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Genesis 12:1-4 (NIV)

<sup>10</sup> Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. <sup>11</sup> Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. <sup>12</sup> So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

Genesis 18:10-12 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. <sup>6</sup> Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me."

Genesis 21:5-6 (NIV)

After God told Abraham that he would be the Father of many nations, Abraham fell face down and laughed. But God told him that Sarah would have a son and God would establish an everlasting covenant with him and his descendants. When the three visitors came to Abraham and one told him Sarah was going to have a son, Sarah overheard and laughed. Sarah, the skeptic, could not fathom the love God had for her and Abraham that he would give them a son. And she certainly couldn't fathom that they were a part of a bigger story about God's love for all mankind. However, God keeps his promises, and a son was born to Sarah and Abraham. Sarah's skeptical laugher turned to laugher of joy, which she recognized came from God.

God continued his loving plan to save mankind by keeping his promise to Abraham, and in doing so, brought an everlasting joy that would ultimately be fulfilled in Jesus.

**Questions:** Would you have had a similar skeptical reaction if you had been Sarah? When have you been in a situation where you have doubted God's promises and power? When have you been in a situation where you have doubted God's love? How does joy that comes from knowing Jesus died for your sins feel different than joy you try to stir up within yourself?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank you for being a promise keeper. Help me to trust your promises that you will do what you tell us through Scripture you will do. You have a bigger plan for my life than I can fathom, because I am loved by you. Let the words of your love sink into my soul and heal those broken places of skepticism and fill those places with joy that can only come from knowing your Son. In the faithful name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

### Day 3 - Rahab, Faithful Convert

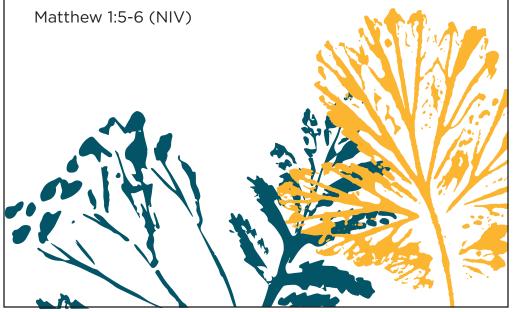
- Read Joshua 2; Joshua 6:22-25; Matthew 1

<sup>8</sup> Before the spies lay down for the night, she went up on the roof <sup>9</sup> and said to them, "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. <sup>10</sup> We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. <sup>11</sup> When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below.

Joshua 2:8-11 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed the father of Jesse,





Rahab was a prostitute who helped hide men sent to spy on Jericho. Her words show a woman, who despite her sin, was able to see the one and only true God and profess that truth out loud. Not only did God see Rahab, Rahab saw who God was. Her life was radically changed by faith, and she was saved.

I have always loved the symbolism of the life-saving scarlet rope as well. It points us to Jesus and his blood, shed for us. And Rahab was faithfully able to display that rope in order to be saved. Not only that, but Matthew names Rahab in the lineage of Jesus. What amazing love the Father had for faithful Rahab, that she would be part of such a larger story!

**Questions:** Have you ever looked at someone and thought their life was so sinful that they would never be able to receive God's loving grace? How can you look at this story and have hope for all mankind? What would it look like for you to hang a scarlet rope out your window?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for loving Rahab so much. Thank you for this example of Rahab's courage and faith to abandon a sinful life and proclaim the truth of your name. Keep me from looking at people and thinking they are too far gone for your love, mercy, and grace. Show me the ways that I can share my "scarlet rope" testimony with others so that they may see your saving grace in my life. In the merciful name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

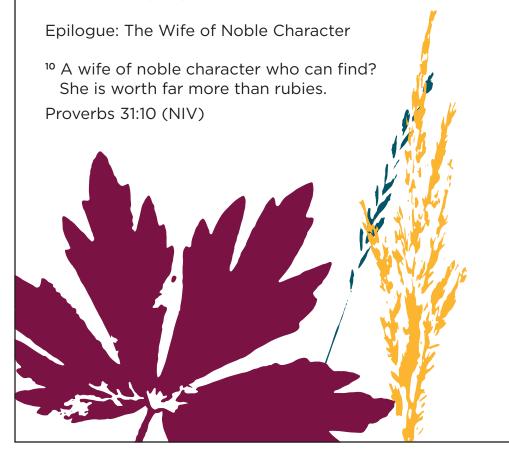


### Day 4 - Ruth, Redeemed

- Read Ruth; Proverbs 31:10; Matthew 1:5-6; 1 Peter 1:18-19

<sup>10</sup> At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?" <sup>11</sup> Boaz replied, "I've been told all about what you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband—how you left your father and mother and your homeland and came to live with a people you did not know before. <sup>12</sup> May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

Ruth 2:10-12 (NIV)



Ruth was a widowed Moabite woman who followed her mother-in-law, Naomi, back to Naomi's hometown of Bethlehem. The love and devotion Ruth had for Naomi is clearly shown. But Ruth is an unlikely candidate for becoming the wife of Boaz, Naomi's relative, because she was a foreigner. Boaz went through the process to become Ruth and Naomi's guardian-redeemer, who was a close, influential relative to whom members of the extended family could turn to for help. He recognized in Ruth a woman of noble character. Despite being an "outsider," he married her, redeeming the family, and she became part of the lineage of Jesus.

If we have hope in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, he has redeemed us. We live knowing that our lives and sins have been fully paid for and we are his bride

**Questions:** When you think about your salvation, do you wonder how you have "found favor" in God's plan for your life? Did you do anything to deserve it? Did you come to him a foreigner like Ruth? Whether or not you are married, what does being a woman of "noble character" mean to you when you look at the life of Ruth?

**Prayer:** Jesus, my Redeemer, thank you for the gift of your love and grace that I do not deserve. Thank you for showing me your plan of salvation through the stories of the Old Testament. They all point to you. What a gift you have given me in your Word. Give me the desire to be a woman of noble character no matter where I am or what I am doing. And help me show the love you have for me to others. In the redemptive name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

# Day 5 - Mary, Blessed

#### - Read Luke 1:26-55

Mary's Song

<sup>46</sup> And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

<sup>47</sup> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

<sup>49</sup> for the Mighty One has done great things for me—holy is his name.

Luke 1:46-49 (NIV)

An angel visits Mary and tells her she will conceive and bear a son who will be called the Son of the Most High. After questioning him how this will happen, her beautiful response is, "I am the Lord's servant." Her response and her song are trusting, obedient and humble, realizing that this is what God is doing, not her. An unlikely woman, as she is not married and is a virgin, Mary had found favor with God. Nothing is impossible to him. Her blessing came not from a place of pride but acknowledging that even in her lowly state God could use her for His glory and not her own – a servant's heart.

Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, came to restore our relationship with the Father that was broken in the Garden of Eden. He gave his life for us, so that we may live. This is the blessing - that he loves us this much.

**Questions:** What comes to mind when you think about the word "blessed?" Have you thought of trust, obedience and humility being a blessing? Thinking about Mary's words, what does a servant's heart look like? How does your life point others to Christ?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for loving us so much that you came in the flesh to dwell among us as a servant. Thank you for putting your plan of salvation into place and using unlikely women to help accomplish it. Thank you for your heart-changing grace and mercy in my life. Help me point others to you, so they can also receive your love for them. In the gracious name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



# You are known by the all-knowing God

#### - Psalm 139

What does it mean to be known by God? Psalm 139:1 tells us, "You have searched me, LORD, and you know me." For the next four days, we will be looking at Leah, Mary Magdalene, the woman at the well, and the woman to be stoned in order to see how God searched them and knew them. This tells us something very important about God and his love for us, and as always, points us to Jesus.

# Day 6 - Leah, Surrendered

#### - Read Genesis 29

<sup>16</sup> Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. <sup>17</sup> Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel had a lovely figure and was beautiful. <sup>18</sup> Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel."

<sup>31</sup> When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he enabled her to conceive, but Rachel remained childless.

<sup>35</sup> She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children.

Genesis 29:16-18; 31; 35 (NIV)

When Jacob went to find a wife, he immediately fell in love with Rachel after meeting her at a well. However, her father, Laban, tricked him by allowing Jacob to work for him seven years and at the end gave him Leah, Rachel's older sister, instead. Described as having "weak eyes." Leah was not as beautiful as Rachel, Jacob worked for Laban another seven years for Rachael to also become his wife, and it was evident he did not love Leah as much as her sister. God knew Leah's inner most being. He had a plan for her, but first Leah was going to have to surrender to him. Leah wanted Jacob's love and attention, and she and her sister were very competitive about it. What she really needed was to focus on the LORD. God brought her to that place of surrender when she finally took her focus off pleasing Jacob and praised God for allowing her to bear Judah.

It is through the line of Leah's son, Judah, that Jesus descends.

**Questions:** How did God show that he knew Leah's innermost being? What did Leah need to surrender to God? Why do we so often seek to please other people rather than God? In what areas of your life can you surrender to God and praise him for all he has done for you?

**Prayer:** Lord, help me to surrender those areas in my life to you that keep me from praising you for all you have done for me. Guard my heart from wanting to please others more than pleasing you. When I feel "less than," show me how wonderfully and beautifully made I am by you. In the beautiful name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



# Day 7 - Mary Magdalene, Free

- Read Luke 8:1-2; Matthew 27:45-61; Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-9; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:11-18

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, <sup>2</sup> and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out;

Luke 8:1-2 (NIV)

Many women were there, watching from a distance.
They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs.
Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Matthew 27:55-56 (NIV)

<sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher"). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

John 20:11-18 (NIV)



Mary Magdalene is mentioned in all four Gospels and is always mentioned first among the other women. She is introduced as a woman from whom Jesus cast out seven demons. Along with other women, she was a faithful follower and cared for Jesus' needs as he traveled. Mary Magdalene was set free, not only from the demons, but received freedom to follow Jesus. After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to Mary at the tomb, calling her by name.

Jesus knew her, had a special role for her, and sent her as the first witness of the Resurrection to proclaim these words to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!"

**Questions:** When you think of your sin and yet you are still known by a loving Savior, how does that make you feel? What does the freedom to follow Jesus, despite your current or past struggles, look like for you? What does it mean to you to know that Jesus knows your name and has a purpose for your life?

**Prayer:** Jesus, I was once where Mary Magdalene was, dead in my sin. But you gave me freedom from the death that I deserve, have called me yours, and have brought me into the new life you have given me. Thank you for my salvation! Show me the purpose you have for me and give me the courage to tell others about the significance of your resurrection. In the life-giving name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



# Day 8 – Woman at the well, Evangelist

### - Read John 4:1-42

<sup>21</sup> "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." <sup>25</sup> The woman said, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." <sup>26</sup> Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

John 4:21-26 (NIV)

<sup>28</sup> Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" <sup>30</sup> They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

John 4:28 (NIV)

<sup>39</sup> Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." <sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. <sup>41</sup> And because of his words many more became believers. <sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

John 4:39-42 (NIV)

Jesus knew this woman would be at the well. He knew her past. He knew her current struggles. He also chose her to be the first to spread the news that the Messiah had come. The plan God had to restore the relationship between himself and mankind, was heralded through this woman as she joyfully told others about Jesus and that he knew everything about her. Based on her testimony, they sought Jesus out and believed him to be the Savior because of his words.

Jesus speaks to us through his Word, the Bible, telling us who he is in relation to us, just like he told the woman at the well. What a joy it is to know him and be known by him.

**Questions:** Do you worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth? How do you know? How do you look to the Bible to "explain everything to us"? If there was a running list of every sin you have ever done, in light of Jesus' saving grace, how could you use it to joyfully exclaim that Jesus is the Savior of the world?

Prayer: Jesus, Scripture tells us that no one is "good." Not one person! Not me. Jesus, you know everything about me - the good, the bad and the ugly. Thank you that you came to give me living water, even though you knew the bad and the ugly. Give me the courage to share my testimony with others so that they may drink from your well of living water, too. In the living name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



# Day 9 - The adulterous woman, Saved

- Read John 7:53; 8:1-11 (The earliest manuscripts & many other ancient witnesses do not have John 7:53-8:11. A few manuscripts include these verses, wholly or in part).

<sup>2</sup> At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. <sup>3</sup> The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group...

John 8:2-3 (NIV)

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. <sup>7</sup> When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup> Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup> At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. <sup>10</sup> Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

<sup>11</sup> "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." John 8:6-11 (NIV)

Scripture says that Jesus went "at dawn." He went first thing in the morning. He went in the beginning of the day here, and he was with God at the beginning of all creation. This passage shows Jesus not only as a teacher, but as a Savior. He knew the hearts of the Pharisees. He knew the sin of this woman. She is often titled, "the adulterous woman." Aren't we all? Here are a few words associated with adultery: unfaithful, faithless, disloyal, untrue, fickle, unreliable, deceiving. Ouch.

Just like Eve, even as image bearers, we let sin creep in and keep us from being the people God has called us to be.

The good news is that HE is faithful. HE knows you intimately. HE loves you. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ as the Lord over your life and your Savior, you are not only his creation but are his child. And like the adulterous woman, you have been shown mercy, grace, and forgiveness despite your sin. Jesus came to reverse the curse. As daughters of Christ, let us rest in the knowledge of this truth about Jesus and about us.

**Questions:** When you hear this story, do you think of her more as an adulteress or saved? Why? When you read the list of words associated with adultery, did you see yourself in any of them? If Jesus came to reverse the curse, what does that mean for women?

**Prayer:** Jesus, you were in the beginning, before time. You knew all before the creation of the world. You knew how the story in the Garden was going to play out. You had a plan to pursue me despite the curse on me. Thank you for saving me when I was lost in my sin that kept me from having a relationship with you. Thank you for sacrificing yourself so that I can live a new life in you. In the sacrificial name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



- Psalm 19:14

How can the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to God? The next four days we will look at Hannah, Anna, the bleeding woman, and the Canaanite woman. We will see laments, statements of faith and how they were heard by a loving God.

# Day 10 - Hannah - Worshipful

### - Read 1 Samuel 1 & 2

<sup>11</sup> And she made a vow, saying, "Lord Almighty, if you will only look on your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the Lord for all the days of his life. and no razor will ever be used on his head." 12 As she kept on praying to the Lord. Eli observed her mouth. 13 Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk 14 and said to her, "How long are you going to stay drunk? Put away your wine." 15 "Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. <sup>16</sup> Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief." <sup>17</sup> Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

<sup>19</sup> Early the next morning they arose and worshiped before the Lord and then went back to their home at Ramah. Elkanah made love to his wife Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. <sup>20</sup> So in the course of time Hannah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the Lord for him."

<sup>27</sup> I prayed for this child, and the Lord has granted me what I asked of him. <sup>28</sup> So now I give him to the Lord. For his whole life he will be given over to the Lord." And he worshiped the Lord there.

1 Samuel 1:11-17; 19; 27-28 (NIV)

Hannah was loved by her husband but wanted desperately to bear a son. As she laments to the Lord, Eli the priest misinterpreted what was happening. Even the priest got it wrong. Hannah's lament and prayer was worshipful and trusting in a God who could answer it. Hannah worshiped again early the next morning and conceived. The name given her son, Samuel, was significant. In Hebrew, Samuel can mean either "Name of God" (*Shem*), or it can mean "God has heard" (*Shama*). Hannah eventually brought Samuel to the temple to be in service to the Lord, just as she had promised.

Hannah asked. God heard. Eli may have gotten it wrong, but God in his sovereignty did not. Hannah's worshipful posture showed a woman who knew and adored the God she prayed to. As you read Hannah's prayer in Chapter 2, it is a song similar to Mary's song (See Day 5) as it anticipates the Messiah. "He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed" (v. 10). Jesus is the anointed King. He hears us.

**Questions:** Have you ever been in a worshipful place in your life when someone interpreted it wrongly? Did you stay worshipful, or did you abandon it because you felt like people didn't understand? Do you feel that it's okay to lament? What does Hannah's worshipful posture say about who God is? How did Hannah's prayer ultimately focus more on God than her?

**Prayer:** Jesus, you hear my laments, my passionate expressions of grief and sorrow. You welcome my laments, prayers, and worship even when others don't understand them. Help me worship you knowing that you love me, know me, and hear me. I pray that I will acknowledge the way you choose to answer my prayers as part of your sovereign plan. Thank you for being the God who hears. In the sovereign name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

## Day 11 - Anna, The Witness

### - Read Luke 2:22-40

<sup>22</sup> When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord <sup>23</sup> (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), <sup>24</sup> and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

<sup>36</sup> There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,<sup>37</sup> and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. <sup>38</sup> Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

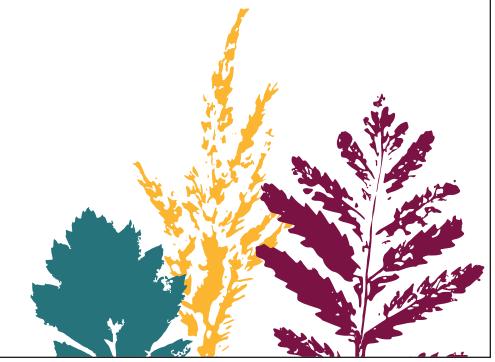
Luke 2:22-24; 36-38 (NIV)

Anna was worshipful woman, never leaving the temple, she fasts and prays. When Jesus was presented in the temple, Anna, being a prophet and witness, recognized Jesus as the Messiah. She first gave thanks to God. Then, she spoke about the child as the Messiah. Her years and years of worshiping, fasting, and praying brought her to this day. She centered her life on God. She worshiped him. God heard her. Then the people heard her.

Anna stayed in the temple devoted to God for so many years. Her focus was on God and on the coming Messiah. The words of her mouth and the meditations of her heart were acceptable to the Lord, and she was used by God to share the news of the Messiah to others.

**Questions:** Do you think of Anna and wonder how it would look for you to be this worshipful? Have you ever fasted? Do you consider fasting as a part of worship? God used this woman as a prophet. How important do you think it was for her to be thankful to God first before she prophesied? How can God use you to point others to Jesus?

**Prayer:** Lord, I pray for devotion like Anna. Guide me to worship you according to your will for my life, where I am right now. Thank you for being a God who hears prayers that I utter over and over. Use me to point others to you and proclaim you as Savior of the world. In the prophesied name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



# Day 12 - The Bleeding Woman, Restored

- Read Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48
- <sup>43</sup> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no one could heal her.<sup>44</sup> She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.
- <sup>45</sup> "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."
- <sup>46</sup> But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."
- <sup>47</sup> Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.<sup>48</sup> Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."



At request of the well-known religious leader, Jairus, Jesus was on his way to Jairus' house to bring his 12-year-old daughter back to life. On the way, Jesus was interrupted by a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. The same amount of time Jairus' daughter had been living and loved, this woman had been bleeding and rejected. Knowing that Jesus could heal her, she merely touched the hem of his robe. But it wasn't the robe that healed her, for Jesus immediately knew power had gone from him. It was a statement that showed those surrounding Jesus that he was the one with the power. Notice here that the woman falls at Jesus' feet in humility. At the risk of more rejection, she confesses about her bleeding, why she touched him, and confirmed the healing. The public statement and acknowledgement by Jesus restored her into the community.

Mark's account includes Jesus' words: "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering." Like this woman, those who call Jesus, Lord, have been freed from suffering. We are restored in our relationship with him.

**Questions:** When was a time you felt rejected by someone? Did they see you as God sees you? Do you have a testimony about how Jesus healed you, either physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually? Do you truly believe that you have been restored and freed from your suffering? How can your words of testimony be used by God to point others to him?

**Prayer:** Jesus, I fall at your feet knowing that you are the only one with Sovereign power. You hear me when I bring my suffering to you. And you give me your peace which surpasses all understanding. Thank you for hearing me, Lord. In the peace giving name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

## Day 13 - The Canaanite Woman, Faithful

### - Read Matthew 15:21-28

<sup>21</sup> Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>22</sup> A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly." <sup>23</sup> Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us." <sup>24</sup> He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." <sup>25</sup> The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. <sup>26</sup> He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs." <sup>27</sup> "Yes it is, Lord," she said. "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." <sup>28</sup> Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.

Matthew 15:21-28 (NIV)

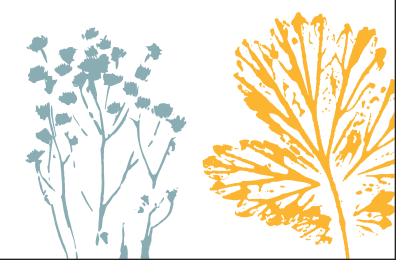
Here Jesus encounters a Gentile, a non-Jew. Immediately she calls him "Lord, Son of David." She recognizes her own unworthiness in his presence and asks for mercy. This shows great humility before she even states her request - to heal her daughter. It looks as though Jesus is ignoring her. Her response is to entreat him twice more, calling him "Lord." His lesson regarding the dogs shows that he is the Messiah to the Jews first. His use of the word "dog" appears derogatory toward this non-Jewish woman. However, she persists because, whether she realizes it or not, she repeats God's covenantal words to Abraham...that ALL nations will be blessed through him. God's plan of restoration was for ALL.

Again, the woman beseeches Jesus with all humility, even calling herself a dog, but recognizing that the Master Jesus is her Lord, too.

Jesus heard her, a Gentile. Even many Jews would not understand what this unlikely woman understood. Jesus is Lord. She knew it. She proclaimed it. And it was recognized by Jesus as GREAT faith in HIM. Her daughter was healed.

**Questions:** Is Jesus Lord of your life? This woman proclaimed him Lord three times. In what ways do you proclaim him as your Lord? What does it look like to come before Jesus in humility? Who in your life are you praying for fervently? Do you think it is wrong to pray to God for something over and over?

**Prayer:** Jesus, how fervently do I call out your name in prayer knowing that you are the Lord of my life? Do I trust that you are who you say you are through Scripture? Continue to humble me, Lord, so that I can see you for who you are. When I am weak in faith, give me your strength. Show me through your Word how to have "great faith" like this unlikely woman. In the healing name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



### You are seen by the ever-present God

- Psalm 56:8

Have you ever wondered if God truly sees you when you are struggling? In Psalm 56, David speaks to God and says, "Record my misery; list my tears on your scroll – are they not in your record?" For the next four days, we will read how God saw and had compassion for Hagar, Naomi, Martha and Mary, and Jesus' mother, Mary.

## Day 14 - Hagar, Seen

#### - Read Genesis 16 and Genesis 21

<sup>11</sup> The angel of the Lord also said to her: "You are now pregnant and you will give birth to a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard of your misery. <sup>12</sup> He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers." <sup>13</sup> She gave this name to the Lord who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me."

Genesis 16:11-13 (NIV)

<sup>14</sup> Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the Desert of Beersheba.

<sup>15</sup> When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. <sup>16</sup> Then she went off and sat down about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there, she began to sob.

<sup>17</sup> God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. <sup>18</sup> Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation."

<sup>19</sup> Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

Genesis 21:14-19 (NIV)

In her distress Hagar, Sarah's slave, fled from mistreatment by Sarah who had given her to Abraham to bear a son. But Hagar couldn't flee from God. This young slave is saved by God, and she gives him the name "El Roi," the God who sees me. In a culture where naming someone usually represented authority over that person, Hagar was allowed by God to witness the truth of who he is and speak it. Later, she bears a son and calls him Ishmael meaning "God hears." God heard Hagar and he saw her in her distress. Just a few chapters later, we see a distressed Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael into the desert with the assurance from God that he would make a nation from Ishmael. Again, in the desert, a place of desolation, God hears Hagar and provides for her and Ishmael and keeps his promise.

Sarah and Abraham had a human plan to try and achieve God's promise for Abraham to be the father of many nations. It resulted in jealous contempt by Sarah and grief for Abraham. But despite their human plan, God showed that he was in control. He had a perfect plan in place and eventually it would be the plan for Jesus to save mankind, just as God promised.

**Questions:** Think of an instance when you have tried to "flee" from God? Do you believe that God saw you in your affliction, in your place of desolation? What promises can you hold onto when you are distressed?

**Prayer:** Lord, there are times when I feel so alone and feel that no one sees how I am treated or what I am going through, but you do. You see me. Thank you for your ever-present love so that I know I am never abandoned by you. Bring me other women who need to hear that you see them, hear them, and love them. In the infinite name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

# Day 15 - Naomi, Comforted

#### - Read Ruth 1

<sup>16</sup> But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me." 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her. 19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them. and the women exclaimed. "Can this be Naomi?" 20 "Don't call me Naomi," she told them, "Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. 21 I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me." <sup>22</sup> So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabite, her daughterin-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.

Ruth 1:16-22 (NIV)

On Day 4 we read about Boaz being Ruth and Naomi's family redeemer. But God had a larger plan for Ruth, who would be part of God's plan of redemption for mankind through Jesus. The story started in Naomi's grief. After losing her husband and both sons, she was bitter, even trying to send both daughter-in-laws away. It may have even been easier for Naomi had she not brought a non-Jew back with her to Judah. However, Ruth stayed with Naomi. In Naomi's distress, and despite what she wanted, God saw her and gave her the gift of Ruth.

God was healing Naomi. Not only was Ruth's loyalty eventually a comfort to Naomi, but Naomi was able to formulate a plan for Ruth to go to Boaz to redeem the family. Going from bitterness, to surrender, to acceptance, Naomi also became part of the plan for God's redemption.

Both Naomi and Ruth show us how God can bring us people to comfort us, even when we don't want to be comforted. When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, he gives us the Holy Spirit as our Comforter, but it takes surrender of our sinful lives and acceptance of the gift of salvation so that we too can be used by God.

**Questions:** When was a time that you let bitterness fester in your heart so you could not see what God was trying to do for you? Do you have that family member or friend who brings you comfort even when you try to reject being comforted? Pray for that person and thank God for them. How can you accept where you are right now in your life and realize that God can use you for his eternal purpose?

**Prayer:** Lord, you see me right now and know everything I am going through. There have been times when, because of my grief or suffering, I have become bitter. Show me if I am in that place right now. I want to surrender my pain to you and be healed no matter what that looks like. Give me the desire to serve you for your glory and eternal purpose. In the comforting name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



# Day 16 - Martha and Mary, Regarded

#### - Read John 11

11 Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.<sup>2</sup> (This Mary, whose brother Lazarus now lay sick, was the same one who poured perfume on the Lord and wiped his feet with her hair.) <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." <sup>4</sup> When he heard this, Jesus said, "This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it."

<sup>17</sup> On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. 18 Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, 19 and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. 20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary staved at home, 21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask." <sup>23</sup> Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." <sup>24</sup> Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day." <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; <sup>26</sup> and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup> "Yes. Lord," she replied, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. <sup>34</sup> "Where have you laid him?" he asked. "Come and see, Lord," they replied. <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept.

John 11:1-27; 32-35 (NIV)

Scripture says that Jesus loved Lazarus, which is why it is so surprising that he tarried before he went to the tomb. But he was working in the waiting. Both Martha and Mary were of course distraught. Jesus regarded both of them. Regarded means "to consider and appraise usually from a particular point of view." Jesus regarded each woman where they were in that moment. He saw them from the viewpoint of their Messiah on a mission of which raising Lazarus was a part. But first, he had a teaching moment with Martha when she regarded Jesus as the Messiah, believed it, and proclaimed it. He also regarded Mary on her knees crying. He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. He grieved the curse of death. He grieved his friend's death. Jesus wept.

Jesus knew this would be a turning point in the story on his way to the cross. By raising Lazarus, after being dead four days, the Messiah put God's glory on display. Jesus, the Son, was glorified through it.

**Questions:** How does it make you feel to know that Jesus regards you as you are in this moment, no matter what you are going through and no matter how strong your faith is? When you are in a season of waiting, is it hard for you to imagine that Jesus' timing is perfect? Why do you think John records how Jesus interacted with Martha and Mary right before his most important miracle?

**Prayer:** Lord, you are ever-present, regarding me at all times. You collect my tears. You weep with me. Remind me that your timing is perfect and there are glorious reasons for it. Give me patience when I am in a season of waiting. Thank you for revealing your glory through your death and resurrection. In the magnificent name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

# Day 17 - Mary, Attended to

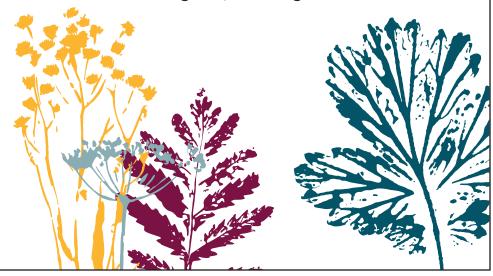
#### - Read John 19:16-30

<sup>25</sup> Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," <sup>27</sup> and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

John 19:25-27 (NIV)

John's gospel is the only gospel with the account of Jesus seeing his mother at the cross and attending to her. Jesus was following Jewish custom to provide for his mother. In this case, he chose the disciple John, one of his disciples, to care for her. The Greek word here for "saw" is idon, meaning to stare at, to discern clearly, to attend to. Despite his own suffering, Jesus attended to his mother and made provisions for her.

Up until his last moments, Jesus was taking care of others. The suffering servant was serving from the cross. From the chaos surrounding him, he brought order.



**Questions:** Can you imagine the anguish in Jesus watching his mother suffer even as he was suffering? Why do you think it was important for Jesus to ask a believer to take care of his mother? How does this point to God being a God of order?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for truly seeing me and attending to my needs. You know exactly what I need and how best to provide for me. Please bring me sisters in Christ to support me during difficult times and use me to support others in their time of need. Thank you for loving me so much that you took the chaos of sin and suffered a horrible death on the cross to create order. In the caring name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



# You are instrumental for God's Purpose

- Colossians 3:23-24

In the Old Testament and New Testament, God honored women by making them part of his plan to bring about salvation through his Son. And as Christianity spread after Jesus' ascension, women played significant roles in spreading the Gospel. Miriam, Esther, Deborah, Lydia, Phoebe, Priscilla, and Junia, served the Lord in meaningful ways showing who he is and how he loves us.

### Day 18 - Miriam - Present

- Exodus 2:1-10; 15:20-21; Micah 6:4

<sup>5</sup> Then Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. <sup>6</sup> She opened it and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him. "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. <sup>7</sup> Then his sister asked Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and get one of the Hebrew women to nurse the baby for you?" <sup>8</sup> "Yes, go," she answered. So the girl went and got the baby's mother. <sup>9</sup> Pharaoh's daughter said to her, "Take this baby and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the baby and nursed him.

Exodus 2:5-8 (NIV)

<sup>20</sup> Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. <sup>21</sup> Miriam sang to them:

"Sing to the Lord,

for he is highly exalted.

Both horse and driver

he has hurled into the sea."

Exodus 15:20-21 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery.

I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam.

Micah 6:4 (NIV)

From the time she was a young girl, Miriam was part of God's plan for the people of Israel.

She was present at the Nile River at the right time to offer her mother as Moses' nurse. Moses would go on to be Israel's deliverer from slavery in Egypt, foreshadowing Jesus being our deliverer from the bondage of sin. Miriam and her brother Aaron were undoubtedly helpful to Moses as they stood by him and helped lead the people of Israel during the years in the desert. However, Miriam wasn't the perfect sister. An account in Numbers 12 relays how Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses resulting in Miriam contracting leprosy. Moses interceded for her, and she was eventually restored. Despite her mistakes, Miriam served the Lord as the first female prophet and a worship leader. Moses' whole family was used as instruments of God's plan to redeem his chosen people.

Even when she messed up, Miriam was still useful for God's purpose. Miriam's presence as a leader in the Old Testament anticipated how God would continue to use women to support Jesus and the disciples and to grow the church in the New Testament.

**Questions:** How did a young Miriam, in saving Moses, set in motion the future of this great leader? How can the church give girls opportunities to serve at a young age, so they can grow in their knowledge of the Lord and in their service to him? Have you ever made a mistake and had someone intercede for you? Do you believe God is a God of second chances?

**Prayer:** Lord, I look at how you used Miriam throughout her life, and I am encouraged. She was present at the right place at the right time. I pray that you will place me at just the right time to do Kingdom work for you. Give me the desire to step out in faith and to discern what you are calling me to do and keep me humble. In the interceding name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

### Day 19 - Deborah, Wise

#### - Read Judges 4 & 5

<sup>4</sup> Now Deborah, a prophet, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. 5 She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided. 6 She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulunand lead them up to Mount Tabor. 7 I will lead Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands." 8 Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." 9 "Certainly I will go with you," said Deborah. "But because of the course you are taking, the honor will not be yours, for the Lord will deliver Sisera into the hands of a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. 10 There Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali, and ten thousand men went up under his command. Deborah also went up with him. <sup>14</sup> Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the Lord has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the Lord gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, with ten thousand men following him. 15 At Barak's advance, the Lord routed Sisera and all his chariots and army by the sword, and Sisera got down from his chariot and fled on foot.

Judges 4:4-15 (NIV)



As a prophet, judge, and military leader, Deborah broke through the ranks of men to be chosen by God to lead in a unique and unlikely way for these times. Her wisdom was sought out by the people. Her obedience to God's commands was fearless. Her willingness to lead and execute God's battle plan when Barak refused was revealing. God used Deborah in mighty ways which were not common in this patriarchal society, but she was an integral part of his plan. Her song in Judges 5 is worshipful and shows a woman who knows who God is. It ends with, "So may all your enemies perish, Lord! But may all who love you be like the sun when it rises in its strength." And the land had peace for 40 years.

God uses women in essential and effective ways to accomplish his will. Like Deborah, perhaps you may be called into an unlikely position, to do an unlikely task, to serve our great God for his glory.

**Questions:** Why do you think God uses unlikely women like Deborah to make such an important impact on history? When you think of wise women, what qualities do they have? Do you think Barak's unwillingness to lead was because of his respect for Deborah's abilities or because he was a coward? Do you think God rewarded Deborah's obedience and effectiveness with the 40 years of peace in the land? What would it take for you to be a Deborah?

**Prayer:** Lord, thank you for giving me an example like Deborah to show me what leadership qualities women can have. I pray that because of my love for you, I will obediently answer anything you call me to do and that I will continue to praise you. It is you I want to serve. Let your name be praised in Heaven and on Earth. In the mighty name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

## Day 20 – Esther, Courageous

### - Read Esther 2:15-18 and Chapter 4

<sup>12</sup> When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, <sup>13</sup> he sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. <sup>14</sup> For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" <sup>15</sup> Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: <sup>16</sup> "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Esther 4:12-16 (NIV)

Esther was a Jewish queen to King Xerxes of Persia. It is interesting that in the Book of Esther, God is never mentioned. But throughout the story, he is working behind the scenes to have this beautiful, courageous, and unlikely heroine execute his plan to save the Jewish people. When encouraged by her uncle, Mordecai, that perhaps she was in this honored position for such a time as this, she immediately requests support through people fasting for her for 3 days. Then, she boldly responds to Mordecai's plea with, "If I perish, I perish." Her willingness to die for the chance to save her people shows her courage, faithfulness, and tenacity.

Even though God is silent in this story, he used Esther's willingness to die for her people to actually save her people. She was vital to God's plan to be true to his promise to Abraham and ultimately to save all mankind through Jesus.

**Questions:** Can you recall a time when God appeared silent, but you realized later he was working behind the scenes the whole time? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt God had placed you there "for such a time as this?" Did you go willingly or reluctantly? Are you an Esther or a Mordecai?

**Prayer:** Lord, you are sometimes silent. Help me to trust you in those silent and still times. Send women to encourage me to step out in faith and do the hard things for you. Thank you for using me as an instrument in your Kingdom. In the almighty name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.



### Day 21 – Lydia, Phoebe, Pricilla, and Junia, Sndustrious

### - Read Acts 16:11-15, 40; Romans 16

<sup>14</sup> One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. <sup>15</sup> When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

Acts 16:14-15 (NIV)

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. <sup>2</sup> I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me.

<sup>3</sup> Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. <sup>4</sup> They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.

Romans 16:1-4 (NIV)

<sup>7</sup> Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

Romans 16:7 (NIV)

After Pentecost, Christianity began to rapidly spread. Numerous women are mentioned in Scripture as instrumental to the spread of the Gospel. Lydia was an accomplished businesswoman who opened her heart to the Lord and her home to the cause.

Phoebe was called a deacon of the church of Cenchreae and benefactor. Priscilla and her husband Aquila worked closely with Paul even risking their lives and are mentioned six times (Acts 18:2-3, 18-19, 26; Rom 16:3-5; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). Junia is mentioned as an outstanding apostle.

Each of the descriptions of these women show them to be industrious for the sake of the Gospel. They worked alongside men in influential ways as entrepreneurs, benefactors, hosts, teachers, deacons, apostles, church leaders, messengers, missionaries, and evangelists in the first churches. There is no doubt that the tireless efforts of these women, and others, were instrumental in God's plan to share the Good News of the freedom from sin through the salvation of Jesus Christ.

**Questions:** Have you asked God to use you for his Kingdom work? How can these industrious women inspire you to answer God's call to work for him? Have you ever grown weary serving God? Why do you think that is? What are some new ways perhaps that you can serve him?

**Prayer:** Lord, I have spent three weeks meditating on your Word. Your Word has shown me examples of amazing women, who have faults like me, used to point others to you. Show me areas where I need to improve, things I need to eliminate, people I need to forgive, or whatever else may stand in the way of me being totally committed to serving you and being an example of a woman who is loved, known, seen, and heard by you. Thank you for being such a loving God from before the beginning of time. My eternal hope is in you.

In the powerful name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

Friends.

I pray you have seen over the last 21 days that, like these amazing women in the Bible, you are loved, known, heard, seen, and instrumental for God's purpose. Before the beginning of time, God desired a relationship with you. His plan to redeem all mankind from the curse of sin was accomplished through the blood of his Son, Jesus Christ who died on the cross for you.

If you have repented of your sin and have accepted the free gift of grace by acknowledging Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you have been restored into a relationship with God. Halleluiah! Please share your story with someone!

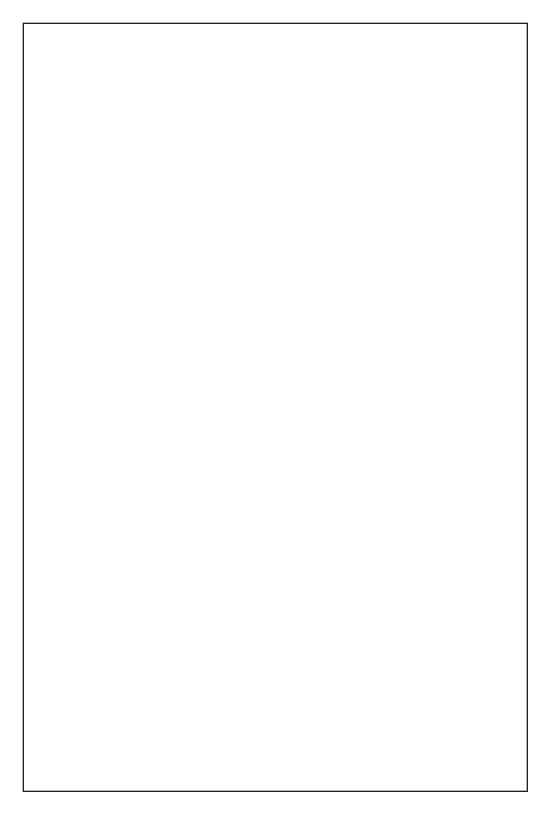
If you are uncertain what it means to have a relationship with God through the blood of Jesus, please reach out to a trusted Christian whom God has put in your path. God lovingly seeks relationship with you.

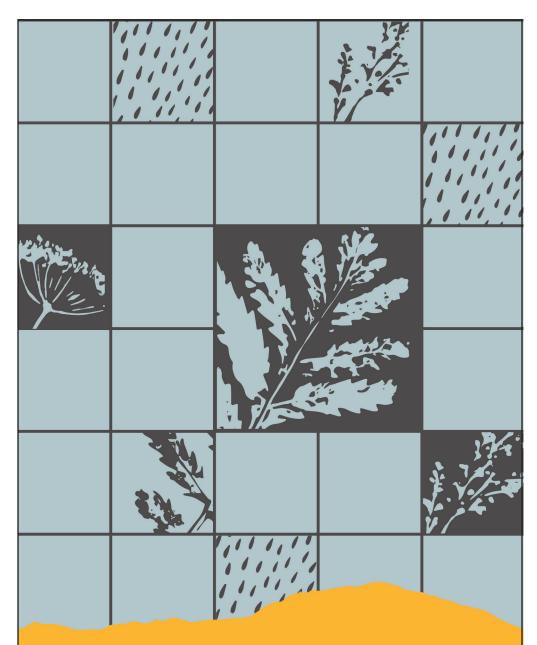
From Paul's benediction in Romans 16:25-27, "Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith— to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen."

Blessings,

Candace







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