

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

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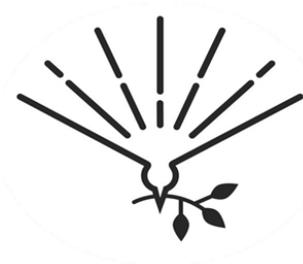


Chasing Hope: How Ordinary People Make Extraordinary Disciples

Session 5 - The Women: Mary, Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene, and Others Who Followed Jesus

Day 1 - Women in the World of Jesus

1. Jewish women in the first century were always under a man's authority and protection. According to custom, once a Jewish girl got married (typically around 13-14 years old), her guardianship would pass from her father to her husband. If something happened to her husband, her father (or in the absence of her father, another male relative) would take charge of her again. A woman's primary role in society was in the home, where she nurtured and nourished her family. What do you imagine the life of a young Jewish woman was like in the first century? (Be sure to share both the good and the bad.)
2. Read Proverbs 31:10-31. This was a popular vision of ideal womanhood that Jewish girls were taught in the first century. What virtues are lifted up in this proverb?
3. Jewish girls in the first century also grew up hearing about Deborah, a woman called by God to lead the Israelites in the Old Testament book of Judges. Read Judges 4:1-10. How do you think Deborah's story might have inspired generations of Jewish girls and women?
4. We know from the four gospels that many women became disciples of Jesus. What specific challenges do you think they faced when making the decision to follow him?



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Day 2 - Mary the Mother of Jesus

1. Mary of Nazareth was the only person to witness the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Not only did she raise Jesus, she also followed him as a disciple. Write down what you remember about Mary, the mother of Jesus.

2. What can we know about Mary's character and personality by reading these passages?
 - a) Luke 1:26-38

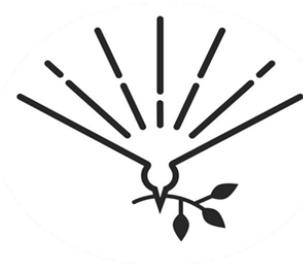
 - b) John 19:25-27

 - c) Acts 1:14

3. What do you think it cost Mary to follow Jesus? What challenges did she face?

4. Of all the people who followed Jesus, Mary knew him the best, and she believed he was God incarnate. What does it say to you that Mary and so many others who knew him well believed in him to the point of suffering with and for him?

5. How would your life, and your faith, look different if you followed Jesus with Mary's courage and conviction?



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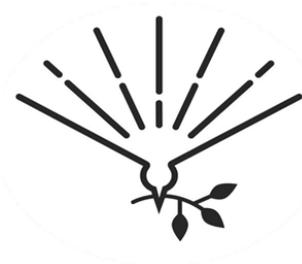
Day 3 - Mary of Bethany

1. Mary of Bethany was the sister of Martha and Lazarus (the man Jesus raised from the dead), and she appears to have been a very close friend and confidant of Jesus. What does it say about Jesus that he had close, platonic female friends at a time and place when such relationships were not allowed?

2. Read Luke 10:38-42. In this story, Jesus showed up to the home of Mary and Martha, and we can presume that all of his disciples and their families were coming over, too. Because hospitality was so important in her culture, Martha felt tremendous pressure to prepare their home to receive their guests. But Mary just sat there, listening to Jesus. What does this story tell you about Mary's personality and priorities?

3. Now read John 11:17-37. Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was very sick when his sisters sent word to Jesus. They wanted the Lord to come to Bethany in time to heal their brother, but Lazarus died before Jesus arrived. Verse 19 says "many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother." So once again, their home is full of guests. Then someone announced that Jesus was outside, and this time, instead of tending to her guests, it was Martha who went to Jesus. And instead of going to be with Jesus, it was Mary who stayed back so that Martha could go first.
 - a. What does this detail suggest about Mary's character?

 - b. What stands out to you about Mary's interaction with Jesus in vv. 28-35, and why?



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3. Matthew 27:55 says, "Many women were there, watching [the crucifixion of Jesus] from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs." Does this fact surprise you? Why or why not?

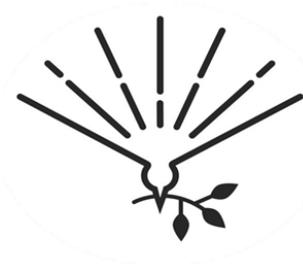
4. In Luke 8:1-3 we're introduced to Joana, whose husband, Chuza, was the steward over King Herod's household. Given that Herod was obsessed with finding and eliminating Jesus and, in fact, had already beheaded Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, what do you imagine Joana gave up in order to follow Jesus? What does that tell you about her?

Day 5 - The Samaritan Woman at the Well

1. Read John 4:1-15. Why was it inappropriate for Jesus to initiate a conversation with this woman? What was he trying to tell her, and why?

2. Read 4:16-26. How did Jesus speak to her about her past and present sin, and how did she respond?

3. This woman knew her stuff. She was well versed in Samaritan (and Jewish) scripture and theology. What points did she make, and how did Jesus respond to those points?



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4. Read 4:39-42. What happened when the woman went back to her town after meeting Jesus? Why is this significant, especially given her status as a woman with a past?

5. What does it mean to you that Jesus not only initiated contact with this frice-married Samaritan woman who was shacking up with her boyfriend, but that he also inspired her to share the gospel with her entire town?

Day 6 - Personal Reflection

Write your reflections about the discipleship of the women you've studied this week. How has their faith inspired you along your path of Christian discipleship?