

Leader's Guide

Chapter 1 - Woman at the Well

(Questions with a * are from the workbook.)

Opening discussion question: What does it feel like to be an outcast?

Day 1

Main points:

1. Jesus loved the outcast.
2. We are called to love the outcast.
3. As outcasts, we are loved by God.

Read John 4:1-9

Jesus loved the outcast.

Discuss the Samaritans, their history, and what made them outcasts.

Discussion questions:

How do we know this woman was an outcast?

The time of day she was going to the well

* If you knew this woman's background what would you have thought about her?

How did Jesus show acceptance to the woman?

Why do you think Jesus reached out to the outcast?

We are called to love the outcast

Would you have treated this woman as an outcast or would you have readily accepted her? Would she have been one of your good friends?

Who are some of the outcasts in our culture?

How should we treat the outcasts in our culture?

How can we reach out to the outcasts in our culture?

As outcasts, we are loved by God.

When have you felt like an outcast?

Loneliness:

In her book titled *What Women Tell Me*, Anita Lustrea says, **“I sense that loneliness is epidemic among women, especially Christian women, even those who go to church every Sunday.”**

Do you see loneliness being an issue in our culture? Or in the church?

Jesus reached out to the lonely, the outcast.

Discuss the barriers that Jesus tore down when he encountered this Samaritan woman.

Jews/Samaritans

Men/Women

Rabbis/Women

Sinful/ “Righteous”

What are some barriers that we build between people?

Galatians 3:26-29

Jesus came to break down barriers.

Day 3: Living Water

Main Points:

1. Jesus is our source of living water
2. Sin in our lives can keep us from receiving “living water.”
3. Jesus’ revelation that He was the Messiah.

Living Water

Read John 4:10-15.

Discuss living water.

John MacArthur describes living water as, “salvation in all its fullness, including forgiveness of sin and the ability and desire to live an obedient life that glorifies God.”

What had this Samaritan woman tried to substitute for living water?

* What are some things that people try in order to fill their thirst?

Sin keeps us from receiving living water

Read John 4:16-19.

* How would you feel if you met someone who knew every detail about your life?

* What would you expect from the one who knew everything about you?

Before this woman could partake of the living water that Jesus offered, she had to deal with the sin in her life.

We have to deal with sin in our lives in order to receive everything God wants for us.

What does sin do in our lives?

Separates us from God

Keeps us from fulfilling His purpose

Takes us off His path

Jesus' Revelation

Read John 4:20-26.

The Samaritan woman changed the subject from herself to religion.

What does her question show us about her?

* What does Jesus' answer reveal about Him?

Jesus revealed to this Samaritan woman that He was the Messiah.

Why do you think Jesus did not openly proclaim to everyone that He was the Messiah?

* Why do you think Jesus chose to reveal Himself to this Samaritan woman?

Day 5: Changed

Main Points:

1. This Samaritan woman left her jar at the well, just as she left her past behind after she met Jesus.
2. After meeting Jesus, this Samaritan woman became an evangelist.

Leaving her jar

Read John 4:27-38.

*Why do you think she left her jar behind when she went into the village to tell others about Jesus?

Describe this heavy jar that she carried to gather water.

Talk about how we need to leave our past, our burdens, with Jesus. Some people continue to carry their burdens around rather than leaving them at Jesus' feet.

*What has changed in your life because of Jesus?

An Evangelist

Read John 4:39-42.

After her encounter with Jesus, this woman became an evangelist. She was excited about telling the people she avoided about Jesus.

Discuss how we often feel about talking to others about Jesus. Is it difficult or easy?

* Why do you think this Samaritan woman found talking to others about Jesus to be easy while many of us find it difficult?

Discuss Jeremiah 20:9

Because Jesus changed her life, she willingly told others about Him.

Closing:

Talk about how scandalous this encounter was. Jews did not speak to Samaritans. She was shocked by her encounter with Jesus and it changed her life forever.

Talk about how are lives are changed because of what Jesus has done for us and how that changes the message we give to others.

*** In my experience, it takes an hour or longer to discuss all of this material. If you do not have that amount of time, I suggest you cut material by deciding what is important to your class.**

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Chapter 2 - Mary, Mother of Jesus

(Questions with a * are from the workbook.)

Opening discussion question: Discuss an event or events that changed your life or the life of others. For example, you could discuss how September 11, 2001 changed many things in our country.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was chosen by God for a special job, but being the mother of Jesus was also a difficult job. As followers of Christ we should never think that our life will be easy because we are believers. In fact, our lives may be more difficult because we choose to follow God.

Give an example of someone who is going through a difficult time.

Day 1

Main points:

1. Mary was a “servant of the Lord.”
2. Mary served with a heart that praised God.

Read Luke 1:26-38

Mary was “highly favored” but not because of something she had done, but because of who God is. You “have found favor with God” because of God’s grace.

Mary’s response to the angel

***What do you learn about Mary from this response?**

Humble, willing to serve God, submissive, faith

How big a job was this that Mary just agreed to?

What does it mean to you to be a servant of the Lord?

Mary was a servant of the Lord and her service was not always pleasant or easy. Sometimes serving the Lord will change our lives in ways that are not easy or welcome.

Luke 1:39-45

Mary's visit

***Why do you think Mary went to visit Elizabeth?**

Luke 1:46-49

***When have you praised God for something difficult in your life?**

Mary's response to being chosen was to praise God. She didn't complain. She felt honored and she took it seriously.

What attitude do you have when you serve the Lord?

Serve cheerfully or do you complain?

Praise God that you have been chosen or do you gripe that someone else is not doing it?

Do you struggle with your attitude in service?

Mary understood that she was chosen for a special purpose and she praised God for being chosen and she took it very seriously.

Mary's life was changed forever by this event and her attitude was, "I am the Lord's servant."

Day 3 - Chosen to Serve

Main points:

1. Serving even when it is uncomfortable.
2. Mary served when she did not have all the answers, but had many questions.

Luke 2:1-7

Nothing comfortable about where Mary gave birth.

Do we sometimes think that in order to serve we must be comfortable?

Sometimes we are told to serve and it is not a choice or a matter of our own comfort.

***When have you served God in a place or situation that was uncomfortable?**

Luke 2:8-20.

***What does Luke 2:19 say Mary thought about the visit from the shepherds?**

From the study, talk about what "pondered" means – "to put things together."

Mary was not given the complete picture by God. I am sure that she had many questions about this baby and her role and she was not given all of the answers.

We are given a purpose and a place to serve but **we are not always given all of the answers to our questions**. There will be times when we will ponder how God is working in our lives.

Have you ever had a time in your life when you “pondered” events?

Luke 2:21-24

What sacrifice did Mary take to the priest?

Why did she bring this sacrifice?

Throughout Jesus’ life we see Mary’s obedience to God. She and Joseph obeyed the Jewish law when they went to sacrifice. There was never an attitude of “do you know who I am?”

Mary was the mother of Jesus but she and Joseph were still poor. Their income did not increase because of their role. They did not get a new house to raise this son in.

They were not blessed materially.

Luke 2:41-52.

What does verse 51 say that Mary thought about Jesus spending this time in the temple studying with the priests?

We continue to see Mary serving without having all the answers.

John 2:1-11

Mary's role was to encourage Jesus to do what He was sent to do.

**Have you ever encouraged someone to do what they were sent to do?
Or have you been encouraged by others to do what God has gifted you to do?**

Day 5 - A Role Change

Main Points:

1. Mary's role changed throughout Jesus' life.
2. Mary's soul was pierced in many ways, just as Simeon prophesied.

In this lesson we looked at how Mary's role changed throughout Jesus' life. Our roles change throughout our lives sometimes they are welcome role changes and other times they are difficult role changes.

Our roles as parents change as our children grow up.

Luke 2:25-35.

***What role did Mary have at this time in Jesus' life?**

Meet his needs, nurture him, teach him

Prophecy: A Pierced Soul

Mary was told that because of this child her life would not be easy.

***How do you think Mary felt when she heard this prophecy?**

Pierced soul

Mt 2:13-18

Discuss Mary's feelings as they escape to Egypt and as she knows that many boys were killed because of her son.

She must have been alarmed and scared.

Mark 3:20-21

Mark 3:31-35

***What role did Mary have in Jesus' life at this time?**

She was needing to cut the ties but very hesitant, protector, letting go

Mary's role was changing and she was becoming less important as a mother in his life.

Matthew 13:53-58

Mary's role has become that of an encourager.

How is this different than when we saw her encourage him at the wedding banquet?

John 19:25-27

***How do you think Mary was thinking and feeling as she stood at the cross?**

I wonder if she felt like everything had gone wrong. Like this could not possibly be God's will.

Have you ever felt like that?

Surrender – she had to let go, she had to surrender to God’s will

Jesus took care of Mary while on the cross

On the cross, Jesus met our greatest need – a Savior.

The last time we hear about Mary is in **Acts 1:14**.

Mary has become a follower of Jesus. She was waiting in that room for the Holy Spirit just as many other followers were doing.

No matter what her circumstance, Mary still considered herself the “Lord’s servant.”

She served in difficult times, she served in joyful times, and she continued to serve even when she was overcome with grief.

No matter where you find yourself, in what circumstance you are in, we still need to take on the attitude of a servant of the Lord.

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Chapter 3 - Woman Caught in Adultery

I. Introduction

Talk about pardons given by the state and federal government. In order to receive a pardon you have to apply and meet certain qualifications. You can not apply for a pardon if you have done certain crimes. (For more information I searched online Pardons in Texas.)

I wonder if we sometimes look at grace like we look at pardons. Do we think we have to qualify and some sins are covered by grace while others are not? Do we act like grace is given to some and not to others?

II. Day 1 – Guilty

Read John 8:1-5

A. Describe the Temple scene:

To read more about the Temple in Jesus' time go to:

www.therivercrc.com/library/study/templ.htm

It may be beneficial to understand what a great structure the Temple was in Jesus' day.

Jesus was teaching early in the morning and there was a large crowd because many Jews came to the Temple in the early morning. In the distance the crowd hears a commotion and as it gets closer they see a group of men dragging a woman with them as they approach Jesus. There may have been screaming and cursing as this woman is dragged before Jesus. Maybe she was clothed, maybe her clothes were torn, or maybe she had very little clothing on. Eventually everyone is looking at the commotion rather than looking at Jesus. The teachers of the Law and Pharisees approach Jesus and throw the woman at His feet and demand a verdict for this guilty woman.

B. The Woman

How do you think this woman feels about being brought to Jesus?

Furious, embarrassed, scared, humiliated

What do you feel for this woman?

Do you feel sorry for her? Do you think she is getting what she deserves because she is guilty?

(I find that many women feel sorry for her because they see her as a victim, but women who have been the victims of adultery do not have a lot of sympathy for her.)

C. The Accusers

Read Luke 8:6-11.

Why did the Pharisees bring this woman to Jesus?

Do you think they cared about her? Did they even care about the Law?

This woman was bait for their trap, she had no rights, she was guilty and powerless.

Read Leviticus 20:10.

Where was the adulterer?

D. Jesus' Response

What were some of Jesus' options when this woman was brought to him?

It really was a trap. I am sure the Pharisees were excited to come up with this one.

If he enforced the law, he would not be welcomed by sinners. If he let her go he would lose all credibility as one abiding by the law.

Instead of answering them, what did he do?

Wrote on the ground

Don't know what he wrote – maybe scriptures, or a list of sins

What do you think the woman was thinking when Jesus started writing on the ground?

Is he drawing a line for everyone to stand behind before they began to stone her?

What is he doing? “Did he hear them? Does He understand what I have done?”

Whatever he wrote it caused her accusers to leave.

E. Our Response

Romans 3:23

We are all guilty sinners who will one day stand before Jesus.

We all have sin in our lives. It may not be something that others see. It may be something like **pride, envy, or jealousy**, but we all sin. When we look at this woman we see someone who has made a mess of her life, but we also need to see her as a **fellow sinner**.

III. Day 3 – Changed by Grace

Read John 8:6b-9.

A. Jesus' requirement for stoning

Jesus' response: “If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”

Deuteronomy 17:7

Who did Jesus say should cast the first stone?

Why do you think Jesus required this of the witnesses?

Matthew 7:1-5

It is easier to see the sin of others

So as Jesus was writing in the sand the crowd began to leave. **Who left first?**

Why do you think the older ones left first?

B. Jesus' response to the woman

How do you think the woman felt as she watched the people leave?

Relieved, wondering what is going on, surprised

Eventually, she is standing alone with Jesus.

The One who was without sin, the One who was qualified to pick up a stone and begin stoning is standing alongside the guilty.

Jesus was the first to forgive and He was the last one to leave.

Jesus rescued this woman in the midst of her sin. He did not wait for her to get her life together and then come to him.

He did not insist that she start going to church and then He might think about forgiveness.

He met her where she was and gave her a gift she did not deserve – grace.

C. Jesus' response to us

Romans 5:8

Christ died for us while we were living in the ugliness of our sins.

He does not wait for us to get it all together and then offer grace. *He offers grace in the midst of our sin.*

In his book *Grace Awakening*, Charles Swindoll says, “God delights in choosing those most unworthy and making them objects of His unconditional acceptance.”

“Most unworthy.” That was that woman but it is also you and me. We are the “most unworthy” who are objects of His “unconditional acceptance.”

John 8:10-11, Romans 8:1-2

Jesus did not condemn her and he does not condemn us in our sin. That is the gift of grace

IV. Day 5 – Leaving Sin Behind

A. Jesus’ Challenge

What was Jesus’ challenge to this woman?

“Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Why do you think Jesus called her to leave her life of sin? And why does he call us to leave our lives of sin?

Sin separates us from God

“Sin holds back everything God has in mind for you.” - Blackaby

What are some things that sin could keep from happening in your life?

Keep from being a witness for him

Doors may close

B. The Consistent Pursuit of Holiness

I John 3:9

Matthew 5:48

What does this mean to you? Live perfectly? Don't bother because I can't be perfect.

Blackaby, *“No, but it does mean a consistent pursuit of holiness and consistent growth in holiness.”*

Holiness: *The Pursuit of Holiness*, Jerry Bridges, describes holiness this way, ***“Holiness is not a series of do's and don'ts, but conformity to the character of God and obedience to the will of God.”***

How do we pursue holiness and grow in holiness?

How do we measure our Christian growth?

Many people have marks on walls in their homes where they measure their kids physical growth. We watch our kids grow physically, do we measure our personal, spiritual growth?

Do we set spiritual goals for ourselves or are we willing to stay the same spiritually?

Thomas - *“But not being able to reach perfection doesn’t excuse us from surrendering to and receiving God’s enabling grace to grow.”*

Blackaby says, “The active practice of sin is replaced by the **active practice of righteousness.**”

What does the active practice of righteousness mean for you?

How do we do that?

Examine our lives daily

What we watch, read, or listen to

How we talk – critical, complaining, encouraging, tear down

Read and discuss Titus 2:11-14.

Grace will lead us to live holy lives.

People may shy away from talking about grace because they feel that people will take advantage of God’s grace. When people truly understand grace and the price that Christ paid for our grace it will lead them to live holy lives.

V. Closing

Lessons from this woman:

1. We, like her, **are sinful** and we have been caught in our sin.
2. We **have been forgiven**. We have received God's grace, his undeserved gift. And because of God's grace:
3. We are called **to leave our lives of sin**.

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Chapter 4 - Mary of Bethany

(Questions with a * are from the workbook.)

Opening discussion question: How do you worship?

Is worship something we only do in a group setting in our churches?

Rick Warren in Purpose Driven Life says,

“True worship – bringing God pleasure – happens when you give yourself completely to God.” (Page 78)

“God is pleased with different sacrifices of worship: thanksgiving, praise, humility, repentance, offerings of money, prayer, serving others, and sharing with those in need.” (page 105)

Mary of Bethany teaches us about worship.

We see her worship at 3 different times, in 3 different ways:

1. Choose to sit at Jesus' feet
2. Fall at His feet and acknowledge Him as Lord
3. Give extravagantly

Day 1

Main points:

1. Choosing to sit at Jesus' feet
2. Choosing the “better”

Read Luke 10:38-39

- Choosing to sit at Jesus' feet
Mary made the choice to sit at Jesus' feet and learn from Him the day He came to her house.
- Jesus honored, respected Mary by allowing her to sit at His feet
He thought she was worthy

Do we ever consider ourselves not worthy to sit at His feet?

Read Luke 10:40-42

What is the "better" thing that Jesus is talking about?

***Do you take time out of your day to sit "at Jesus' feet?"**

***What keeps us from regularly spending time with Jesus?**

Discuss the quote from John MacArthur at the bottom of page 55.

Day 3 – Jesus' Love

Main Points:

1. God does not always work in our lives the way we want.
2. Grief and disappointment in the midst of tragedy.

John 11:1-6

***What do you think they wanted Jesus to do?**

We can safely say that Jesus' response to Lazarus' illness was not what Mary, Martha, or the apostles expected or hoped for.

***When have you not received an answer to a prayer as quickly as you had hoped?**

***Have you ever felt that God must not care?**

***Maybe a prayer wasn't answered the way you hoped.**

John 11:17-27

Mary did not go out with Martha to meet Jesus.

What do you think about Mary's response to Jesus' return?

John 11:28-37

What did Mary do when she went to see Jesus?

What did she say?

Both Mary and Martha said, "If only you had been here."

***When have you thought or said "If only...?"**

"If only God..."

"If only that had not happened..."

John 11:38-44

Verse 40 – Belief

Talk about the importance of belief in our lives.

Mary had immense grief and I think disappointment with Jesus but her belief in him allowed her to see a miracle.

Grief and disappointment do not have to keep us from believing.

Jesus showed Mary, and the others, that he could work in the midst of tragedy.

When have you seen God work in the midst of tragedy?

How did seeing this miracle change Mary's life?

Jesus did care, He did love her

His way was the best way

Day 5 – Extravagant Love

Main Points:

1. Mary gave extravagantly
2. We are also expected to give extravagantly – our lives.

John 12:1-3

***How had Jesus changed Mary's life?**

Welcomed her, taught her, respected her, he valued her

Loved her

Allowed her to witness one of his greatest miracles

This story is recorded in John, Matthew, and Mark. Talk about what we learn in each of these accounts.

What do we know about this dinner party?

Simon the leper

Anointed head and feet

Who was there?

Lazarus, Simon, disciples

Mary comes into this party and she anoints Jesus head and feet with a pint of pure nard – very expensive.

Equivalent to a year's salary, app. 300 denarii

***Why do you think Mary would give such an extravagant gift to Jesus?**

Because of everything he had done for her and for others.

She had experienced His love and she had seen how he had changed the lives of others.

John 12:4-6

Who criticized her?

***If you had been sitting in that room what do you think you would have thought?**

Crazy

Wasteful

John 12:7-8

Jesus praised her for her extravagant gift.

***What are we asked to give to God?**

Romans 12:1

For some, giving their lives is too extravagant a gift to give.

***Why are some hesitant to give their lives?**

When we think about what he has given us what should our reaction be?

***What does it mean to give our lives?**

Give everything – time, love, worship, money, talents

Closing:

Oswald Chambers says in *My Utmost for His Highest*, “Worship is giving God the best that He has given you.”

Worship God by giving back

Leader's Guide

Chapter 5 - Widow of Nain and Crippled Woman

(Questions with a * are from the workbook.)

I. Opening discussion:

Discuss compassion; tell a story about compassion or ask when the class when they have seen an example of compassion.

Discuss the definition of compassion: “sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it.”

In these 2 women we see Jesus see their distress and alleviate it.

I. Widow of Nain

Luke 7:11-17

A. Widows

Woman: widow, one son, he is dead.

Widow in that society – someone who depended on others to support them, when this woman lost her son she lost the last family member that could take care of her. Her life changed dramatically with the loss of her son. She would spend her days begging, dependent on the kindness of strangers to have food to eat each day.

God's care for widows:

Dt 10:17-18, James 1:27, Psalm 146:9

B. Funeral

Funeral ceremony in that day – large crowd, orator, mother, son carried on a bier, mourners – maybe hired, passers by join procession

*** What are some traditions around funerals that you have observed?**

C. Meeting Needs

Verse 13 – “His heart went out to her.”

Jesus was God in flesh and Jesus showed us the compassion that God has on His people.

Verse 14 – Jesus touched the bier. Didn’t have to touch it. Willingly made himself unclean by touching it.

*** Why do you think Jesus touch the bier?**

Jesus showed that He cared when He touched the bier.

Jesus gave her exactly what she needed, when she needed it.

He gives us what we need, when we need it.

Hebrews 4:16 – *Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Mercy and grace in our time of need

His mercy and grace comes in many forms. He may change our circumstances or he may give us the grace to get through our circumstances.

***When have you received God’s grace and mercy?**

Or What does His grace and mercy feel like in our lives?

II. Crippled Woman

Luke 13:10-17

A. Suffering

18 years she has been lived her life bent over.

Picture this woman – bent over, weighed down, “crippled by a spirit”

*** What is it like to walk bent over?**

This woman suffered from more than a physical disability, she suffered spiritually. She was crippled by Satan.

B. The Eyes of the Lord

Jesus saw her:

Discuss how difficult it would have been for Jesus to see this woman. The women are in the back of the synagogue and she would have been difficult to be seen since she was bent over.

In *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim says, “When a popular preacher was expected, men crowded the area of the Synagogue, while women filled the gallery.”¹

The Eyes of the Lord:

Psalm 34:15, II Chronicles 16:9

C. “Bent over” in Spirit

We may or may not suffer physically like this woman, but most of us know what it is like to be “bent over” in spirit.

***What are some things that can bring us low, or bend us over in spirit?**

Sin, guilt, sorrow, and despair can bring us low. Illness, discouragement, defeat, and weariness, can also cause us to feel “bent over” in spirit.

D. Healing on the Sabbath

Jesus knew the Sabbath law – he was Lord of the Sabbath. But he never let rules get in the way of his compassion. He came to this earth to set people free even on a Sabbath.

Ruler of the Synagogue

What was he most concerned about?

In both stories we see Jesus break rules or traditions.

What does this tell you about Jesus?

III. Jesus’ Compassion

In two women, the widow of Nain and a crippled woman, we see how Jesus’ compassion changed their lives.

Widow – His heart went out to her

Crippled – Stopped teaching and healed her

Jesus’ compassion was immediate. He saw a need and He knew He could do something about it.

A. Experiencing Compassion

**Psalm 86:15, Psalm 103:13, Isaiah 30:18, Psalm 116:5, Psalm 145:9,
2Corinthians 1:3, Lamentations 3:22-23**

His compassion meets us where we are. He is the God of compassion.

What does God's compassion feel like in your life?

*** What is your response to His compassion?**

B. Giving Compassion

Ephesians 4:32

*** How can we give compassion?**

*** What keeps us from giving compassion?**

Colossians 3:12

Choose compassion like we choose our clothes. Do we spend time putting on compassion like we put on clothes?

IV. Closing

Discuss how compassion changes lives. It changed the lives of these 2 women and compassion changes lives today.

We are God's hands and feet to give compassion to this world.

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Chapter 6 - Bleeding Woman

(Questions with a * are from the workbook.)

I. Opening discussion:

***Can you think of anything today that might be similar to being unclean under the Law of Moses?**

II. Day 1

Mark 5:24b-34

A. Suffering

Most women suffer in some way with their monthly period. It can affect our lives in different ways. It can affect us physically and emotionally.

Can you imagine what this woman went through because she bled for 12 years?

What do you think are some of the ways she suffered for 12 years?

Weak, anemic, alone, discouraged, hopeless, depressed, shameful, desperate

B. Unclean

Leviticus 15:19-27, 31

What are some of the effects of this woman being unclean?

Kept her from religious activities

Isolated, separated

She was enslaved to an illness – **her illness controlled her life.**

***Have you ever dealt with something that consumed (controlled) your life like this must have consumed had a hold over this woman's life?**

Illness, depression, infertility, addiction,

***What had this woman done to try and get better?**

Can you imagine her frustration?

Not only did she not get any answers but she was worse after seeing all of these doctors.

She found that the world does not always have answers for us.

***Have you ever been frustrated by searching for answers and not finding any?**

III. Day 3

Mark 5:27-29.

Scene around Jesus – a large crowd

Can you feel her desperation?

What measures did she take to get near Jesus?

Was she wearing a disguise?

Was she trying to hide in a crowd?

***Why do you think this woman did not yell out or try to get Jesus' attention?**

feared rejection, was unclean,

***What does her willingness to go to Jesus tell you about this woman?**

A woman of faith who struggled with an illness – persistent
Desperate, willing to risk, courageous, nothing to lose
She was willing to risk everything to get close to Jesus.

What keeps us from getting close to Jesus?

“Getting close to Jesus takes courage, risk, and work.”

Jackie Robinson quote.

“Life is not a spectator sport. If you're going to spend your whole life in the grandstand just watching what goes on, in my opinion you're wasting your life.”

***Are you a spectator or participant in this Christian life?**

Is your Christian life about being entertained or being changed?

Ezekiel 33:30-32

***What words of God do you need to put into practice?**

IV. Day 5

Mark 5:30-34

A. Healed

The woman believed that if she could just touch his clothes she would be healed.

***What question did Jesus ask after she touched Him?**

Jesus knew the answer to His question, He was God.

***Why do you think Jesus insisted on this woman acknowledging what had happened?**

For others to see

How would this affect others?

If you were in the crowd and saw what happened what effect would it have on your faith?

For her own faith

No one else shared the glory. No medicine, or doctor, or time, etc.

To restore her place in society

so she could go to the priest and be declared clean

This miracle was not just for this woman. It was for everyone who saw it and for all who read his word.

When God works in our lives we may be tempted to think that it was for us alone. Rarely is it just about the one person alone.

***When has someone else's faith encouraged you?**

We must share our faith stories to encourage others in their faith.

B. Her Faith

Hebrews 11:6

We are told to have faith, but it is not always easy to have faith.

I Peter 1:6-7 says that our faith is refined by trials.

When has your faith been tested?

What happened to your faith after that test?

Most people around Jesus did not have that faith.

In what ways was this woman different from the others around Jesus that day?

Faith, willing to risk, do whatever it took to get close to Jesus

“Faith means being willing to risk in order to be changed.” (In study)

What did this woman risk in order to be healed?

Ridicule, rejection, last hope

What may we have to risk in order to be changed by Jesus?

Our plans, comfort, success, money, rejection by others, ridicule

It is easy to assume that her faith was large, but what if her faith was actually very small?

Matthew 17:20

What does this verse tell us about the size of our faith?

In this woman we see her faith take her to Jesus. She did not allow anything to keep her from going to Jesus.

V. Closing

Discuss the following quote:

In his book *Fresh Faith*, Jim Cymbala says, “Faith alone is the trigger that releases divine power....Our trying, struggling, or promising won’t work – faith is what God is after. Faith is the key to our relationship with Him.”

We may have times in our lives when we face difficult times like this woman. We may even have times when our lives are controlled by an illness. The challenge in our lives is to choose faith.

Choosing faith changes lives.

Leader's Guide
Chapter 7 - Mary Magdalene

I. Introduction

Discuss demon possession may begin study with a story of someone who today said they were possessed by a demon. The point of this discussion should be to realize that Satan continues to work in our world today.

Do you think demon possession still exists today?

How do we see it?

Have you ever seen demon possession?

II. **Day 1**

Luke 8:1-3.

***What do we know about Mary?**

Magdala

Large city west of Galilee

Most women were known as the wife of... or mother of...but

Mary is known by the town she lives in.

7 demons

What effect did demon possession have on these people?

Matthew 9:32-33 – could not talk

Matthew 12:22 – blind and mute

Mark 1:23-27 – acknowledged Jesus, came out shook the man violently, shrieked

Mark 5:1-5 – tore chains, violent, cut himself, strength and violence

Mark 9:17, and 22 – mute, seizures, threw him into fire or water – wanted to kill the boy

Luke 13:11 – crippled

What did Jesus do for these people?

Seeing how demons worked in the lives of these people, what does it possibly tell us about Mary M?

Controlled her life
Physical and emotional effects
Desperate
Hopeless
Lonely

How do you think you would feel if you were around someone who was demon-possessed?

Luke 11:24-26

Maybe that is what happened to Mary
What does this scripture mean for us?
What fills your life?

Ephesians 6:12

We are in a battle however Satan presents himself today

Satan has many women today in bondage just as he had Mary in bondage.

***What are some ways that Satan is holding women in bondage today?**

Low self-esteem – Not worthy
A past – sins, memories,
Food, or a substance
Fear, depression, anger, or bitterness

Jesus came to set us free just as he set Mary M free.

People who were demon possessed rarely came to Jesus on their own.

The people we see in scripture were either brought to Jesus by a relative or Jesus went to them. Matthew 8:16 says, *“When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him...”*

We may need to take others who are held in bondage to Jesus.

What can we do for these people?

Pray, encourage, spend time with,

III. Day 3 – Disciple

Luke 8:1-3

Why do you think these women chose to follow Jesus and support Him?

What had Jesus done for these women?

He changed their lives so they chose to give their lives to him by serving him and his followers.

***What do you think some people may have thought about Mary Magdalene traveling with Jesus?**

What do you think about these women?

Courageous, radical, bold, thankful, grateful

In Mark 5:18-20 – Jesus would not let him go with him.

***Why do you think Jesus told this man to go home but allowed Mary to travel with him?**

Mary's choice with her freedom – she chose to give back to Jesus.

We have choices to make with our time and money just as Mary did. She chose to give her money and time to Jesus.

Everyday we make choices as to what we do with our time and our money.

What are some of the choices you have made with your freedom, time, and money?

What does the world tell us to do with our freedom?

Serve ourselves –

Serve others when and if they can help us

We are free to do what we want but there are consequences to our choices.

If we choose to serve ourselves first what are some consequences?

Empty life

What are some of the consequences of serving Jesus?

Peace, joy, fulfilled life, purpose, meaning

IV. Day 5 – The first witness

Mark 15:40-41

***What does the fact that Mary Magdalene watched Jesus' crucifixion tell you about her?**

And why do you think Mary stayed to watch the crucifixion

Loyal, brave, Faithful, strong, determined, loved Jesus

Maybe it says something about the way God made women

***If you had been in Jerusalem the day Jesus died do you think you would have stayed to witness his crucifixion or do you think you would have left?**

Mark 15:42-47

Luke 23:55-56.

Mark 16:1

Luke 24:1-12.

John 20:10-16

John 20:17-18.

Why do you think Jesus chose to appear first to Mary Magdalene?

Her journey, her faith

In a culture that said women could not be witnesses in court, Jesus chose a woman to be His first witness. Once again, we how Jesus valued women and how He did not let culture dictate how He treated women.

Josephus said, “From women let no evidence be accepted, because of the levity and temerity of their sex.”

V. Closing

Like our life’s journey, Mary’s journey had many highs and lows.

Mary’s Journey

Low - Demon-possessed

High – Freedom

High - Disciple who served

Low – Jesus crucified

High – Witness to his resurrection

Mary’s journey had highs and lows but she made the choice to follow Jesus.

What choice are you making along your journey?

Leader's Guide
Chapter 8 - Salome

I. Introduction

If you are a mom, a grandmother, an aunt, more than likely you want the best for the children in your life.

Is wanting the best for our children wrong?

When does wanting what is best for our children cross the line?

II. Day 1:

Matthew 20:20-21

Read Matthew 20:17-19 to understand the context that Salome made this request.

Salome's request was made near the end of Jesus' life. He is headed back to Jerusalem and preparing his followers for what is going to happen.

***What do you think of Salome's request?**

***Why do you think she would make this request?**

Tired of waiting for Jesus to set up His group?

Move Jesus along – maybe she really felt Jesus had these positions in mind for her sons, she just wanted him to voice them.

Wanted the best for her sons – felt they were the best to fill the positions.

What ever her reasons were, the result was that her request showed that she was seeking her will in this situation.

***When have you gone to God with your own agenda?**

With the desire of “my will be done.”

***What are some ways that we seek our will above God’s will?**

There are two reasons that we may seek our own will:

1. Pride

How does pride play a part in seeking our own will above God’s will?

2. Fear

How does fear play a part in seeking our own will above God’s will?

Fear of being embarrassed, fear of things not going our way

Fear of an opportunity being missed

Fear of the future if I am not in control

Fear of giving up control

***When have you made a request to God out of fear?**

***According to I John 5:14-15, what happens when we ask according to God’s will?**

III. Day 3:

Matthew 20:22-23

“You don’t know what you are asking.”

I wonder how often we would be told that?

How does that phrase make you feel?

That phrase is humbling to me.

***Have you ever asked for something and later realized that you had no idea what you were asking for?**

What does Jesus’ response to Salome tell you about Him?

Kind, compassionate, did not condemn

When Jesus asked James & John if they could drink the cup He was going to drink and they said they could, what do you think they thought the cup was?

A cup of power, glory, and honor.

Instead it was a cup of suffering. They both suffered for Christ.

James was the first to die – Acts 12:1-2

John last to die, but he suffered as well.

Matthew 20:24-28

***How did the other apostles respond?**

Indignant

Salome's request caused division among their group.

***When have you seen self-promotion divide a group?**

***Jesus used the words "servant" and "slave" what images do you think these words brought to their minds and what images does it bring to our minds?**

Forced labor

Not their own

Owned by someone else

Mistreated

In God's kingdom greatness is serving others.

Jesus equated greatness with service.

What does the world tell us is greatness?

Power, money, authority, fame

***When have you grown spiritually because you were willing to serve?**

Verse 28

When Jesus said this it did not mean as much to the apostles as it would mean later, after his death.

I Peter 4:11

If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

Serving can be difficult and we have to rely on God's strength to serve others.

IV. Day 5:

Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41

Serving can be difficult but it can also be joyful.

I Peter 4:10 says, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."

***What are some things that can keep us from using our gifts to serve others?**

Time, busy

Outside comfort zone

Salome and others, served Jesus all the way to the cross.

Salome's service took her to a place she did not want to be – the cross.

Serving others can sometimes take us to a place we do not want to go.

V. Closing

Mark 16:1-6

Jesus taught Salome how to serve. He gave her a message about service and He gave her an example.

Through this study we have learned how we serve, why we serve, and who we serve.

How are we to serve?

Like Jesus – Matthew 20:28

With love – Galatians 5:13

What does that teach you about serving? Does that change the way you sometimes serve?

Do you ever serve with anger?

Do you ever serve to get something in return?

Do you ever serve for yourself?

Why do we serve?

I Peter 4:11 – so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

Who are we serving?

Ephesians 6:7-8 says, “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.”

Leader’s Guide

Chapter 9 - Martha

I. Opening:

What are some distractions in your life?

II. Day 1:

Luke 10:38-40

Jesus is coming to her house. We can understand her stress and all the preparations that had to be made.

Luke 10:40 – Distracted

What was Martha distracted from?

Hearing Jesus

Being in His presence

Distractions can keep us from:

*seeing God working around us.

* hearing God’s voice.

Priscilla Shirer says, “Many things clamor for attention when life gets busy, and hearing God’s voice in the midst of chaos can be difficult.”

Job 33:14 “For God does speak – now one way, now another – though man may not perceive it.”

In order to hear God’s voice in our lives we cannot be distracted.

What do we need to do to make sure we hear God’s voice?

Quiet; prayer; seek Him; eliminate distractions; listen

Luke 10:40 – Martha was distracted by “all the preparations that had to be made.”

Martha was distracted by preparations.

What are some distractions you face?

Martha was frustrated that Mary was not helping.

Can you relate to her frustration?

Luke 10:41-42

“Worried and upset”

Have you ever been “worried and upset” and missed something important?

Jesus called Martha to leave behind those things that were distractions and focus on Him.

What are some things that can keep us from focusing on Jesus?

III. Day 3: Belief

Look at this story from Martha's perspective.

John 11:1-16

John 11:15 – Belief

Jesus was going to use this situation to help build the faith of many people.

Have you ever had a time when a difficult time helped build your faith?

Luke 11:17-20

How do you think Martha felt as she waited for Jesus to come to Bethany?

Frustrated, "Did He get our message?"

Why did He not do something?

Does it tell you anything about Martha that she was the first to go meet Jesus?

Anxious

Wanted an explanation

Luke 11:21-27

“The challenge is to believe when life is hard.”

All of those who knew and loved Lazarus were challenged to continue their belief when life became difficult.

Why can it be a challenge to our faith to believe in Jesus when life gets difficult?

Don't understand

Don't like it

Even in her grief, Martha stated her belief in Jesus. Her brother had died, Jesus had done nothing, and she did not understand why He did not do something, yet *it did not change who Jesus was*.

“Difficult times test our belief in God, and He is looking for followers who will believe even when times are tough.”

What effect can difficult times and trials have on our belief?

Become stronger

Question everything we believe

May rock your faith – may feel like an earthquake to your faith.

John 11:38-44

What did Martha believe in?

Jesus

She did not expect this miracle, but she believed in Jesus.

John 11:40

Do you have Martha's belief?

How is this belief manifested in your life?

Does it change the way you pray?

Does it changed the way you live?

Ephesians 3:20-21

Like Martha, when we believe in Him, we will see the glory of God revealed.

Discuss the Jerry Bridges quote that is on page 138.

IV. Day 5

John 12:1-8

What was Martha doing at this party?

Serving

How do you think Martha served differently this time from the time she served Jesus and was rebuked?

Serving out of gratitude

Her attitude has changed

Hebrews 4:12

The Word of God “judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

We stay grounded by staying in the Word.

Have you ever served with the wrong attitude?

“Martha continued to use her gift of service even though she was rebuked by Jesus.”

Have you ever seen someone quit a ministry because they were criticized?

Some criticism may be worthwhile and other criticism can be out of line.

Jesus’ rebuke helped Martha refocus on why she served.

Philippians 2:5 calls us to serve with the “same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.”

What does that mean to you?

Serving with humility

Serving with love

How hard is it to serve with humility?

Serving even when we don't receive praise, or recognition.

Serve for God's glory.

I Corinthians 15:58

V. Closing

In Martha we see a follower who continued to believe even in the midst of pain and grief. We also see her continue to serve and use her gifts for God even after she was rebuked.

The challenge for us is to believe and serve the One we believe in.

Today's Woman

Leader's Guide

* This lesson is a review of each woman in the study. This lesson can be very long. So, according to how much time you have will determine how long you can spend on each woman. In order to make this lesson go quicker I recommend not reading all of the scriptures.

I. Introduction:

For us to better understand how Jesus changed women we have to understand how the culture treated women when Jesus came onto the scene. The culture in which Jesus lived viewed women as property. In some instances, men valued their cattle more than they valued the women in their lives. When Jesus came onto the scene, He treated women differently. He talked to them, and taught them. He allowed them to be His followers. He healed them and cared for them.

When we see how Jesus treated women it confirms to us how much He loves us. And if we allow Him, He can change our lives just as He changed the lives of so many women that He encountered.

II. Broken Women

These women all met Jesus while they were living in the midst of their brokenness. They were all desperate for change in their lives.

A. Woman at the Well

John 4:1-26

Describe this woman's brokenness.

Her life is a mess, married 5 times and living with a different man

She is rejected by her own people, she is an outcast

Lonely

Looking for something, meaning in her life

How did Jesus change her life?

Offered her "living water"

Honored her by speaking to her

Revealed He was the Messiah – His message changed her life

Gave her a message that she could not wait to tell others

What did you learn from this woman?

B. Woman Caught in Adultery

John 8:1-11

How was this woman broken?

Her life was a mess

Caught in a web of sin

How did Jesus change her life?

He gave her mercy

He met her where she was – in the midst of her sin

Challenged her to live a new life

We have all been rescued from our sin.

We are all beneficiaries of God’s grace and mercy.

What did you learn from this woman?

C. Widow of Nain

Luke 7:11-17

Jesus came to her on the worst day of her life – she was going to bury her son just as she had buried her husband.

Jesus changed her life when he raised her son from the dead.

Her day went from the worst ever to the best ever.

What stands out to you in this story?

Jesus gave her exactly what she needed, when she needed it and she did not even ask her for it.

Jesus will meet all of our needs. Philippians 4:19, “And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

Jesus’ compassion

III. Women Held in Bondage

Jesus came to set people free from their lives of sin.

In these 3 women we see how they were held in bondage and Jesus set them free.

A. Crippled Woman

Luke 13:10-17

What held this woman in bondage?

Told twice that Satan had crippled her. Verse 11, and 18

Jesus set her free from Satan's bondage.

Again we see Jesus heal someone without being asked. We see His great compassion.

He met her need – her greatest need was to be set free from Satan's bondage

What did you learn about Jesus or about the woman?

B. Bleeding Woman

Mark 5:24-34

She was held in bondage by her illness.

What stands out to you about this woman?

C. Mary Magdalene

What do we know about Mary Magdalene?

7 demons, follower, stayed with Jesus through crucifixion and burial,
Jesus appeared to her first,

What do you most admire about Mary Magdalene?

She chose to follow Jesus?

Watched the crucifixion?

So dedicated?

D. Freedom

Jesus gave each of these women freedom from illness, disease, and demon possession.

Romans 6:16-23

Verse 22

What does freedom in Christ mean to you?

Are you living free in Christ or are you still enslaved to sin?

IV. Believers:

Jesus changed the lives of many women who did not know Him but He also changed the lives of women who knew Him and believed in Him.

A. Mary, mother of Jesus

What did you learn from Mary?

Difficult life

She was a dedicated mother

Heart for God

She saw people worship her son and accept Him as the Messiah. She also saw people ridicule Him, reject Him, and ultimately beat Him and kill Him. Yet, she continued to stay by His side and she continued to believe in Him.

In what ways can you relate to Mary?

B. Mary and Martha of Bethany

Luke 10:38-42; John 11, 12:1-11

They were believers who enjoyed being with Jesus and invited Him into their home. They were very close to Jesus but when they needed Him the most, He did not show up in the way they expected.

Jesus allowed Lazarus to die and they did not know what to think. But then they experienced an incredible miracle and their faith took on a new dimension.

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead they both showed their love to Jesus. Mary, anointed Jesus and Martha served Him.

Mary:

What sticks out to about Mary of Bethany?

A Faithful follower who chose to sit at Jesus' feet

Martha:

What did you learn about Martha?

Believed

Used her gifts to serve Jesus

They faced difficult times but God used those times for His glory.

Salome – Matthew 20:20-28

A mother who wanted the best for her children.

What did you learn about Salome?

How did Jesus change the lives of these believers?

V. Closing

Which of these women did you learn the most about?

Which of these women do you relate to in a different way than when we started?

What did you learn about Jesus through this study?

Jesus meets women wherever they are and He gives us what we need. Whether it is compassion, grace, healing, a challenge to live a life free from sin, or the words we need to hear, Jesus gives us what we need, when we need it.
