



## *Meet the Women of the Passion*

There are different groups of women in the life of Jesus the Christ: women who were healed by Jesus physically and spiritually, women who followed Jesus and provided for his ministry, obscure women whom Jesus noticed, and the women who are his family. Over the five weeks of Lent we will explore the stories of these women of faith asking ourselves -

*What are they saying to us in our time and space?*

Not all the stories of the women we explore in this study take place in the last week of Jesus' earthly life. That is because it is the whole of his public ministry that leads to Holy Week and what we refer to as the Passion of Christ.

Throughout Lent we will *Meet the Women of the Passion*. Who knows, we might learn something about ourselves, and more importantly about the Divine?

March 9 ~ WHAT IS **LENT** and how do we journey through it?

March 16 ~ WOMEN WHO ARE FAMILY ~ Mary the Mother of Jesus, Mary and Martha

March 23 ~ OBSCURE WOMEN ~ Peter's mother-in-law, the woman who touched Jesus' garment, daughter of Jairus, widows, the woman bent over and crippled

March 30 ~ WOMEN AS DISCIPLES ~ Mary Magdalene, the woman at the well in Samaria, the Syrophenician woman, women (named and unnamed) who anointed Jesus's feet

April 6 ~ THE WOMEN IN HOLY WEEK & WOMEN AS THE FIRST WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION ~ Pilate's Wife, Caiaphas' maidservants who challenge Peter, the women of Jerusalem

## **OPENING PRAYER FOR STUDY**

God of Love, as in Jesus the Christ you gave yourself to us,  
as we engage in study of your Word this Lenten season may we give ourselves to you,  
living according to your will. Keep our feet firmly in the way where Christ leads us;  
help our lips speak the truth that Christ teaches us;  
fill our bodies with the life that is Christ within us.  
In Christ's holy name we pray. Amen.

*(Adapted from prayer in Voices United)*

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR YOUR OWN STUDY AND IN A GROUP SETTING**

- Keep an open heart and mind.
- Remember that there is no one correct interpretation of the sacred text.
- Allow yourself to hear others thoughts, and heartfelt beliefs.
- Welcome questions, ask lots of questions. Listen deeply.
- Read different versions of the sacred text and take note of the differences.  
Identify whether you are reading a translation or a paraphrase.
- Explore the historical and cultural context of what you are reading.
- Consult a wide theological diversity of commentaries. Traditional and contemporary thoughts.
- Make study a regular part of your faith journey.
- Share only what you feel comfortable sharing.
- Remember that all faith is a living breathing experience and changing our mind or position on a theological premise is not a failure.
- End with Prayer.

## **CLOSING PRAYER FOR STUDY**

God of all Creation, your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.  
Thank you that we can live in your light and walk in your truth.  
May the things that you have revealed and thoughts that we have shared  
dwell in our hearts and stir us to action.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus the Christ,  
Redeemer, Saviour, and Pattern of Life. Amen.

# Hug the Details

Use the chart below to record your thoughts and questions.

**Pay attention ~ what grabbed your attention? What do you love and what concerns/confounds you?**

**Main players in the text - who, when, and where.**

**Historical, cultural context - author and audience.**

**What I learned and questions I have.**



The season of Lent is an ancient practice of reflection and repentance that begins on Ash Wednesday when we are smudged with ashes and reminded of our mortality, and ends at Easter with the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Traditionally Lent has included spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, and alms giving or charity. These spiritual practices are not meant to be token actions of obedience but transformational actions that help us become more and more like Jesus, more merciful, forgiving and generous. How we engage in Lent is as important to the development of our faith and our personhood as a child of God as is our ability to love our neighbour.

There are three pillars to Lenten observance and so many diverse practices, and so many interpretations of what Lent means. This diversity offers us ample opportunities to engage in ways that are meaningful and transformative for each of us.

Throughout Lent **PRAYER** is a constant, and daily prayer is encouraged. This can be a little difficult for those whose prayer life is limited to Sunday worship. Now, I think many of us do not pray daily because we have never really been taught how to pray, we do not have the words, are not sure how to start, and outside of meals and bedtime we are not even sure when we should pray. In Paul's first letter to the Church in Thessalonica, chapter 5, verse 16, Paul encourages the ancient disciples (and us) to "Rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks for everything - for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (*Inclusive Bible*) This certainly signals to us that prayer can be more than scripted words. Can prayer actually be a way of life? For the novice and the seasoned alike here are a few resources to help you engage in a fuller prayer life this Lent. If you do have a full prayer life, maybe this Lent you might consider a change and allow the Spirit to speak to you afresh?

**Daily Prayer** (For use throughout Lent. Use these prayers daily as often as you are able. If daily prayer has not been a habit chose to either begin or end your day with prayer.)

God of love, as in Jesus the Christ you gave yourself to us, so may we give ourselves to you, living accordingly to your holy will. Keep our feet firmly in the way where Christ leads us; let our lips speak the truth that Christ teaches us, fill our bodies with the life that is Christ within us. In Christ's holy name. Amen.

*PAUSE*

God our Creator, I thank you for your reconciling work, patiently, lovingly, restoring all creation. I thank you for Jesus the Christ, reconciler, Saviour, midwife of our journey to new birth. I thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit, dancing, delighting in the beauty of the earth. This Lent, I seek to open my heart to you and to the work of reconciliation. Help me look forward to your Easter mystery; my heart is restless until it rests in you. Amen.

*PAUSE*

Gracious God, in solidarity of prayer with others this Lent, We confess that we have been a rebellious people. We have broken your covenant, and we have tolerated injustice in our land. We have not shared our food with the hungry, we have not sheltered the homeless, and we have not aided the destitute. We quarrel and fight among ourselves, and we use religion to cover our deceit. We have become a mockery of our heritage; the world looks at us and asks, Where is their God? Forgive us, O God. Subdue our rebellious hearts and restore in us the light of salvation; through Jesus the Christ. Amen.

*PAUSE for personal silent confession.*

But now, empowered by your grace, given to us through Jesus' life, death and resurrection. God of hope, we face this Lenten journey not sure if we are ready or if it would just be easier to stay in our safety and comfort zones. Help us to take the risk of looking within and looking beyond ourselves to the joy that awaits us. Give us hearts of courage and strength for the tasks, which lie ahead. Be with each one of us as we move from the winter of discouragement to the spring of hope. Cleanse our spirits and make us truly ready to be your disciples. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.

End with the Lord's or Saviour's Prayer of your choosing.

**PRAYER RESOURCES**

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>

Bishop's Committee on Creation Care

<https://www.toronto.anglican.ca/diocesan-life/social-justice-advocacy/creation-care/?lang=en>

Loyola Press

<https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/lent/perspectives-on-lent/articles/8-ways-to-pray-during-lent/>




---

**SELF-CONTROL** which traditionally has been known as Fasting is an opportunity for us to consider our many and voracious appetites. Self-Control is an opportunity to not only fast from food or luxury but also to consider our behaviours, inner beliefs, biases, our privilege and status and how this relates to us as reflections of God's image. Giving up some food or drink in Lent is not a spiritual practice, it is ritual practice. If giving something up in Lent is meaningful to you, then continue the practice. While you are doing that I invite you to consider the nature of our appetites - what do you crave in your life, daily or permanently. How does that desire or craving fit into the realm of God - can you achieve or have whatever it is because of your privilege or status, or does it enhance it? Does what you crave or desire have an impact on the planet? Giving up strawberries (or any other food item that does not grow in Ontario in winter) has a positive effect on the planet, less carbon footprint from strawberries flying and then being transported by truck from California to Ontario. So, the Lenten questions becomes should we ever eat food not grown in Ontario? How would that in our perception limit our life? Our spiritual exploration of our personal **SELF-CONTROL** is about aligning our life's habits and practice inline with the realm of God, where equity and justice are the foundation. We cannot have any self-control apart from God's grace.

**SELF-CONTROL ~ RESOURCES**

Nooma Trees -Video series by Rob Bell - this short video is about our work in the kingdom or realm of God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DvAMzso8U8g&t=9s>

The Fruit of the Spirit Part 9

<https://blog.truthforlife.org/the-fruit-of-the-spirit-self-control>

---

Traditionally known as alms giving **GENEROSITY** is the last pillar of the Lenten practices. Giving of our financial resources is important, giving to organizations that change our society is one way we build a more just world. This Lent I invite you to the spiritual practice of **GENEROSITY** ~ this is more than giving of our financial resources. It is a giving of ourselves, it is an invitation to a profound vulnerability that will tell us more about ourselves than we probably want to know. It is an invitation to learn something of the other and then in turn to explore our feelings about it and how it fits within the realm of God.

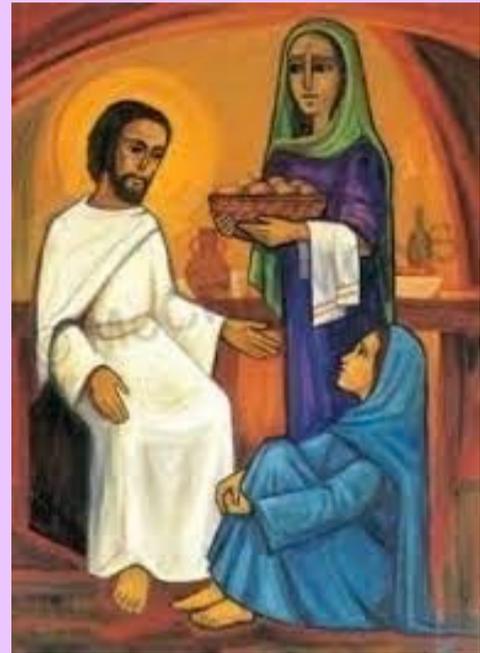
**GENEROSITY ~ RESOURCES**

Centre for Action and Contemplation

<https://cac.org/the-realm-of-god-2018-01-26/>

At the root of our generosity and vulnerability is Compassion

<https://charterforcompassion.org>



## QUESTIONS

1. Before you read any of the scripture answer the following question - Who is Mary? List everything you know about her.
2. Luke 1:46-56 is commonly referred to as the Magnificat. Through the lens of LENT consider the following:
  1. What in the Magnificat stand out to you?
  2. What challenges you?
  3. What is a threat to the Roman Empire?
  4. What is a threat to the Synagogue or Church?
3. Within the appointed scripture is there anything new that you learned about Mary?
4. Mary and Martha are the sisters of Lazarus and chosen 'family' of Jesus. Before reading the scripture related to Mary and Martha record everything you know about them.
5. Is there a tension between the work of Mary and Martha, what have you been taught?
6. What do these women and their relationships with each other and Jesus:
  1. Have to say to us today, in our space and time?
  2. Tell us about the value of women in the life of Jesus?
  3. Tell us about the value of women in our society?

---

Scripture - There are many different translations and paraphrases of the scripture. Reading the same scripture verses from different translations is an excellent way to hear more from the sacred text.

Bible Gateway - <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15&version=NIV>

Read the scripture below and use the His the Details resource to record your observations and questions.

### MARY IN THE SCRIPTURE

MARY SPEAKS ~ Luke 1:26-38; Luke 1:46-56; Luke 2:41-52; John 2:1-11

MARY IS MENTIONED ~ MARK 3:31; LUKE 2:19; 2:34; JOHN 19:25; ACTS 1:14

### MARY AND MARTHA

Luke 1:26-38; John 11:1-34



Faithfulness in obscurity may be the most difficult spiritual discipline to develop. Yet the sacred text offers us countless examples of people and specifically women who were faithful in their obscurity.

We live in a world where everyone is fighting to be the best, be the most beautiful, strongest, richest, most successful, a world where everyone knows your name.

But just how faithful is striving for perfection in the Kingdom or realm of God?

If the last two years of pandemic living has taught us anything, it is that those who we took for granted and did not ascribe as essential have kept us fed and nurtured throughout. Grocery store clerks, library staff, store staff of any kind, nurses, PSW's and other health care workers, teachers, custodians, and so many more who have worked faithfully for years in obscurity. The difficulty with obscurity be it personal or societal is that it is a structure of empire. We personally, and as a society decide who is important and who is invisible. This is entirely opposite to the teachings of Jesus, indeed it is opposite to the creation of humanity in Genesis.

However, obscurity is a reality in our lives so the question becomes ~ how can I be faithful in obscurity? I am reminded of the instructions we hear ever Ash Wednesday from the gospel of Matthew chapter 6. I encourage you to read the whole chapter, verse 5 offers us this advice, "And when you pray, do not behave like the hypocrites; they love to pray standing up in the synagogues and on street corners for people to see them. The truth is, they have received their reward in full." As we delve into the lives of these **OBSCURE WOMEN** found in the life of Jesus let us ask ourselves about our own faithfulness in obscurity.

---

## QUESTIONS

1. What do these stories of Jesus' encounter with obscure women tell us about Jesus, these women, and anyone who is considered obscure?
  2. In the stories what stood out for you most, did you learn anything new about Jesus, about yourself?
  3. Have you ever felt, or been considered obscure?
  4. In our society who are the OBSCURE?
  5. Through the lens of LENT what are these stories of faithfulness in obscurity calling us to?
  6. How can we develop faithfulness as a spiritual practice?
- 

Scripture - There are many different translations and paraphrases of the scripture. Reading the same scripture verses from different translations is an excellent way to hear more from the sacred text.

Bible Gateway - <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15&version=NIV>

Read the scripture below and use the His the Details resource to record your observations and questions.

## OBSCURE WOMEN

Read Matthew chapter 6

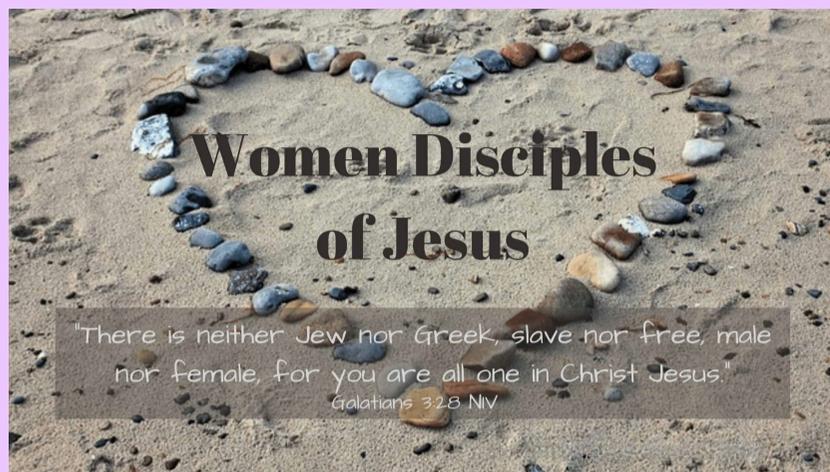
PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW ~ Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:30-31; Luke 4:38-39

THE WOMAN WHO TOUCHED JESUS' GARMENT ~ Matthew 9:2-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48

Daughter of Jairus ~ Mark 35-43

WIDOWS ~ Luke 7:11-17; Mark 4:41-44, Luke 21:1-4

THE WOMAN BENT OVER AND CRIPPLED ~ LUKE 13:10-17



In the ancient world, a disciple is a follower of a teacher. It is more than being a student, a disciple is an adherent not only of the teacher's logos or teachings, but also of their life. It was (and is) a deliberate apprenticeship which produces a living copy of the master or teacher. In the scriptures the only named disciples are male. This week we will explore women whose actions and faith propel them to the status of disciple. In our modern 21st c world we need to ask ourselves anew the transformative questions: 'What is a disciple?' and, 'Am I a disciple?'

*Jesus journeyed through the towns and villages proclaiming the Good News of God's reign. With Jesus went the Twelve, as well as some women he had healed of evil spirits and sickness; Mary of Mandala, from whom he cast out seven demons, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza; Suzanna; and many others who were contributing to the support of Jesus and the Twelve with their own funds. ~ Luke 8:1-3, Inclusive Bible*

Discipleship is more than following a set of prescribed rules, or believing in a set of specific doctrines or dogmas. It begins with understanding the teacher. Jesus' mission and ministry was an extension of the Covenant promises made to Abraham. Jesus is condemned to death because of his commitment to God's ministry of healing, caring for, and feeding the bodies, souls, and minds of God's people. The women who followed Jesus and who were healed by him understood this, they had experienced Jesus' extravagant compassion. The Chosen Twelve were looking for a Messiah who would uphold the social and religious positions they held within the community (Mt 23:1-12, Jn 7:7-13). Jesus did not fit their mold of a warrior king who was coming to release them from the oppression of the Roman Empire. This is a challenge all of us live with today - what is Jesus calling me to? Can I escape or break free from oppression and still be oppressed? What difference am I making in the world? It all feels rather overwhelming and at times hopeless. What did these ancient women know that we do not?

---

## QUESTIONS

1. Watch the Rob Bell, Nooma video - Dust - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM3qHBAekhg>
2. Read the scripture passages below and note the players in each scene and ask:
  1. Does the healing or encounter with each of these women tell us something about God, about Jesus, or the Spirit?
  2. About the community they live in and how they have been treated until the moment Jesus crosses paths with them?
3. What makes them disciples and what can I learn from them?

---

Scripture - There are many different translations and paraphrases of the scripture. Reading the same scripture verses from different translations is an excellent way to hear more from the sacred text.

Bible Gateway - <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15&version=NIV>

Read the scripture below and use the His the Details resource to record your observations and questions.

## WOMEN AS DISCIPLES

MARY MAGDALENE ~ Matthew 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mark 15:40, 47, 16:1,9; Luke 8:2, 24:10; John 19:25, 20:1, 11, 18

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL IN SAMARIA ~ John 4:4-42

SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN ~ Mark 7:24-30; Matthew 15:21-28

WOMEN (NAMED AND UNNAMED) WHO ANOINTED JESUS' FEET ~ Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50; John 12:1-8

WOMEN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY ~ John 8:1-20



Jürgen Moltmann (born 8 April 1926) is one of the 20th c most prolific and important theologians. He is a German Reform Theologian who developed the Theology of Hope. It is a form of liberation theology based on the view that God suffers with all of humanity, while promising humanity a better future through the life, witness, and resurrection of Christ. Moltmann answers the question - Who is God for you? [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z\\_XG7NywTjM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_XG7NywTjM) One of my favourite Moltmann quotes is this, "Without women preachers, we would have no knowledge of the resurrection."

For many years theologians have argued that it could not have been anyone but women to witness the resurrection because after all it was their job to tend to the body for its final burial. Given what we have encountered in the stories of the *Women of the Passion* over these past four weeks I find this line of thinking rather dismissive, add to this the relationship these women have with Jesus and we are bold to ask if the very lives of the women disciples is not actually discipleship? No preconceptions, despair and hope drive these women to Jesus and their response is faithful devotion and transformed lives. After their encounter with Jesus they live with a boldness they had not known, a clarity they had not thought possible, and a purpose they never imagined. In what ways do the events of Holy Week and the Resurrection of Christ impact our lives? Are we *People of the Passion?*

---

## QUESTIONS

1. Make a list of all the women of Holy Week and who are witness to the resurrection.
2. Holy Week begins on Palm Sunday and ends with the Resurrection on Easter Sunday. Within this week there is a series of events - the Triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Cleansing of the Temple, Accusations by the Sanhedrin, Jesus is Anointed by a woman, the Last Supper, The Garden of Gethsemane and the betray of Judas Iscariot, Jesus is arrested, Peter denies Jesus, the trial, the Way of the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Burial, and the resurrection! Where in our world, in this time and space do we see these events replayed?
3. What does Holy Week and the Resurrection mean to you, in other words, Who is God for you?
4. Which of the women in this study has spoken to you most directly?

---

Scripture - There are many different translations and paraphrases of the scripture. Reading the same scripture verses from different translations is an excellent way to hear more from the sacred text.

Bible Gateway - <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+15&version=NIV>

Read the scripture below and use the His the Details resource to record your observations and questions.

### WOMEN OF HOLY WEEK AND RESURRECTION WITNESSES

PILATE'S WIFE ~ Matthew 27:19

CAIAPHA'S MAIDSERVANT WHO CHALLENGED PETER ~ Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:56-62; John 18:25-27

WOMEN AT THE CROSS ~ Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41; Luke 23:49; John 19:25-27

WOMEN AT THE BURIAL ~ Matthew 27:55-61; Mark 15:40-47; Luke 23:49-56

WOMEN AT THE TOMB, WITNESSES TO THE RESURRECTION ~ Matthew 28:1-15; Mark Chapter 16; Luke 24:1-12;

John 20:1-18