

◆
FINDING
THE
LOVE
OF
JESUS

◆
from
Genesis
to
Revelation

◆
ELYSE FITZPATRICK



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To every woman who has ever wondered
whether the Son could love her or would
want to be near her . . .
because, after all, she isn't a man.



Contents

Acknowledgments	ii
Introduction: <i>Forever and Forever He Has Loved Us</i>	13
1. It's All about Him	21
2. Seeing What's Right before You	35
3. Finding the Love of Jesus in the Books of Moses	53
4. Finding the Love of Jesus in Israel's Stories	71
5. Finding the Love of Jesus in His Songs and Sayings	85
6. Finding the Love of Jesus in His Prophets	101
7. Finding the Love of Jesus in His Law	117
8. Finding the Love of Jesus in the Gospel	133
Appendix: <i>Coming to Saving Faith</i>	147
Notes	153

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Introduction

Forever and Forever He Has Loved Us

Jesus loves women. He has loved us since the beginning, even from before the words “*in the beginning . . .*” were written. Think of it, even “before the ages began”¹ he loved us and made a way for us to know and love him in return. He specifically created us as women for he loves our womanness and longed for us to know his love. As part of the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Spirit—God the Son expressed love for women during all the Old Testament times, even though his incarnation as the Man, Christ Jesus, was thousands of years in the future. Before Bethlehem he loved us. And he has promised to love us until the end, when we will finally be beautified as his bride and will celebrate his love forever. Jesus has always loved women. He always will.²

Jesus’ love for women was costly. During his earthly ministry he was scorned because of it. He was a man who crossed over lines of proper decorum to express his love for women. Because he was a pious Jew, he was expected to keep women—especially

women of a certain sort—at arm’s length. Instead, he shocked his disciples by befriending a five-times-married, immoral half-breed (John 4:7–27). He welcomed the kisses of a woman of questionable morals and was scorned for it by Simon, a Pharisee, who concluded that Jesus couldn’t possibly be a prophet because he wouldn’t have let a woman like that touch him had he known what she was (Luke 7:38–39).

He was derided by the religious elite, who “grumbled” about him because he received sinners and ate with them (Luke 15:2). Then he healed a woman whose menstrual blood had made her religiously unclean and had kept her from knowing any human touch for twelve years. Twelve years! He knew that to touch her would make him ceremonially unclean, and so did everyone else. When she tried to hide from him in shame, he insisted that she come forward and receive his love. He lovingly called her his “daughter” (Luke 8:42–48). He spoke peace into her troubled soul. How long had it been since she’d heard words of kindness from a man? Immediately after that encounter, he went into the home of a religious leader whose little daughter had just died. He touched her lifeless hand, again breaking the law, and said, “Child, arise” (Luke 8:49–56). His love for women drove him to open his arms and heart to the outcast, the immoral, the unclean, and the dead. He loved and received their touch, moved by compassion.

Jesus loved women, and because he loved them, he loved opening their hearts to the truth of who he was. It was his joy. He taught them about his eternal love for them and who they would become because of him. He taught them that his love was strong enough to overcome all their sin and fear and confusion. He told them that his love would lead him up Golgotha’s mount to a gruesome execution, where they would weep (Luke 24:6–7), so that he could rescue them from sin and death. And he wanted

them to know that his love would pull him back from death's maw and into a garden where he would once again speak to a woman he loved, which was why he told them he would rise again. God touched them. They touched God.

Engaging women in conversation was normal for the Lord. They were welcomed into the inner circle of his followers (Luke 8:1-3) and he freely allowed them to hear his teaching. Rather than restricting them to conventional domestic roles, he chided busy Martha and told her that her sister Mary had chosen the *one* necessary activity when she shunned her kitchen duties to sit at his feet and learn from him (Luke 10:41-42). Jesus loved the fact that Mary wanted to learn so he stoked that fire within her. Women were invited to listen to him. God spoke words to them.

Then, not long afterward, he taught another woman named Mary (Magdalene) on the morning of his resurrection. Perhaps to make a point about how much he loved being with women, he arranged it so that a woman would be the first human being to hear his voice at his resurrection. In the twenty-first-century Western world in which I live, it's easy to miss the significance of this event. I'm accustomed to seeing women welcomed into important conversations and as lawful witnesses in a courtroom, but that is very different from how it was in first-century Israel. His meeting her *first* was shocking. In this instance, he didn't just cross over a line. He obliterated it. Think of it: Jesus chose a *woman* to be the one who would hear the first word uttered in the new world. And what was that first word? *A woman's name: Mary.* Her response? *Rabboni!* Although Jesus was frequently referred to as *Rabbi* or *Teacher*, this is the only use of *Rabboni* in the New Testament. It's a very special title, a term of endearment, almost like a nickname. It expresses a deeper meaning than simply *Teacher*, though it does mean that. It denotes profound respect

and affection or nearness³ (John 20:16). In essence, she called him *my dear Friend, my beloved Teacher, my Bestie*. When Jesus spoke her name, she responded immediately with her favorite appellation of him: *Rabboni!* Think of it—what came to Mary’s mind when she realized that Jesus had risen from the dead wasn’t *Jeshua*, his proper name, or *Lord*, or even *Rabbi*, but rather *beloved Teacher*. He had been many things to Mary, but he was primarily her Teacher. So she greeted him as her *Rabboni, best Friend, beloved Teacher*. How did her beloved Teacher respond? He taught her about his ongoing mission (John 20:17). Jesus’ meeting with Mary in the garden wasn’t a fluke. It was a preordained event between a beloved Teacher—Mary’s Rabboni—and his beloved student, and it’s meant to tell us something: He wants women to share in his love and mission. A woman was commissioned by God to spread the good news.

With whom did Jesus speak next? Two disciples (Luke 24:13), whom we can safely assume are his uncle Cleopas (Luke 24:18) and another disciple, probably Cleopas’ wife, who was Jesus’ aunt Mary.⁴ I know that might be a bit of a surprise to you, especially if you’ve seen any of the artwork that depicts Jesus walking down the road with two men. It’s easy to assume that the two disciples Jesus intercepted were men, but there is no reason (aside from tradition) to do so. One of them is clearly identified as Cleopas in Luke’s account. At another place, John writes that Cleopas’ wife, whose name was Mary, had been in Jerusalem, standing with Jesus’ mother and his dear friend Mary Magdalene, at the foot of the cross. Wouldn’t it make sense then to conclude that after the crucifixion, when all their hope was gone, when they were completely disheartened and bewildered, that they would decide to return home together to try to rebuild their lives after Friday’s tragic events?⁵

In this, his second appearance on Easter Sunday, Jesus was delighted to talk with and teach another beloved woman. His conversation with her mirrored the important dialogue he had had with Mary Magdalene. He wasn't simply speaking sentimental words to cheer up his aunt after what had to have been a most heartbreaking weekend in Jerusalem. No, he taught her and her husband deep truths about himself, and especially about how he was the focus of all the Old Testament Scriptures. Mary was certainly acquainted with the prophecies that foretold the coming Messiah, and she undoubtedly had experienced Jesus' welcoming love, but she hadn't yet put those two truths together. She hadn't yet seen how he filled the pages of the Scriptures long before he occupied a manger in Bethlehem. The Lord knew that Mary needed to see him in his fullness, so he became her Rabboni, too. Everything that his aunt thought she understood about what the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets taught was turned on its head in a few short hours. God taught a woman how to interpret the Scriptures.

The significance of this conversation (and the ones he eventually had with the rest of the disciples) cannot be overstated. This Emmaus road dialogue changed the way the earliest Christians understood the Bible. It shaped how they wrote the New Testament, and it should change and shape us, too. Their new understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures transformed them from ambitious cowards to bold martyrs for the truth. It enabled Mary, and women everywhere, to rightly understand not only what had just happened in Jerusalem but also how those events were part of God's sovereign plan, a plan that would eventually affect women everywhere. He spoke this monumental truth to a man *and* a woman. Both genders needed to hear that the old way of doing religion was over.

Jesus may have lived at a time when training in the Scriptures was primarily a male endeavor, but he continuously let women know that learning about him was something that he not only offered to them but also expected from them. He loved teaching women, and they loved learning from him. He honored them as valued daughters with the God-given ability to reason and learn and who were not only invited into his classroom but also had the capacity to grasp deep truth. He wanted them there. More than that, he expected them to be there.

You Are Welcome at Rabboni's School, Too

Jesus never changes. His love for women hasn't waned. He loves teaching women and he rejoices when they sit down with their Bibles open and ask him to open their minds and hearts. He's just as pleased to teach you as he was to teach them, regardless of your background, ability, or opportunities.

Think about it: These three Marys were very different women. Mary of Bethany was a single woman who lived with her siblings, Martha and Lazarus. Mary Magdalene was probably also single and was a woman from whom Jesus had cast out demons. Perhaps she was independently wealthy, as she is mentioned as one of several women who supported Jesus out of her "means" (Luke 8:1-3). Jesus' aunt Mary had married into his family and was the mother of two sons (Mark 15:40). Two single women and one married mom were called into the role of beloved pupil and disciple.

Jesus loves women: He loves their minds and their hearts, and he loves to teach them so that they'll grow in their understanding of who he is and all he has done. We, too, can be assured of our growth because Jesus knows us. He knows our capacities and he

also knows what he can enable us to do. Jesus is our Rabboni, our sweet Master Teacher, and he will teach us all that we need to learn as we spend time looking into that paradigm-shattering conversation Jesus had with his aunt and uncle on the Emmaus road. Let's pray that he will open our minds to understand truth so that we can say, along with his aunt Mary, "Did not our hearts burn within us . . . while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32). Have you ever felt that way? Wouldn't you like to?

Walking to Emmaus with Our Bestie

So now, I invite you, in the name of the Rabboni who loves to teach women, into this study. I promise to keep it doable, though I will be pressing you to think and work through brief questions at the end of each chapter.

Because we are going to spend the rest of this book studying the lessons that Jesus began to teach on that first Easter Sunday, I won't belabor them now. But there is one last thought I would like to leave with you: *We can't understand the Lord's Word without his enlightening presence.* We need him to open our minds to truth. "Then he *opened* their [the disciples'] minds to understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). In other words, if he doesn't work by his Spirit while we read and pray and search for light, then the Word he wrote will remain unclear, connections between the Old and the New Testaments will be hazy, and we'll fall prey to the fallacy that the Bible is primarily about us and our lives. On the other hand, we may become apathetic about reading it because we will have concluded (even if we don't give voice to this sentiment) that the Bible doesn't really apply to our daily lives . . . at least not the way that blogs, social media, or other

books do. And even more tragically, either way we will miss the main point, the ultimate story of the ages: Jesus' saving love for women and for all people.

So pray with me now that the Spirit of Christ, your Teacher, would begin to furnish you with new eyes to see Jesus' story in all the Scriptures. We know his story is there because he said it was. But in the same way that his aunt Mary needed help to see him, we need that help, too. You might start by praying something like this:

My Father in heaven, I want to learn to see your Beloved Son, Jesus, in the Word you've given me. Please send your Spirit to open my eyes and help me as I learn this new way to understand what you've said. And please fill my heart with hope that I can do this because you love to bless your daughters with portrayals of your Son. I'm praying in the name of Jesus. Amen.

I promise you that I am praying for you and for all who are reading this book, that your hearts will be filled with zeal as you see the grandeur of the ageless story of the Redeemer who loves you.

Jesus' aunt Mary testified that her talk with him on the Emmaus road opened her heart and set her on fire. And that, my sisters, is what I'm hoping you'll say when you get to the end of our time together. I hope you'll say that he has opened the Scriptures to you and that your heart has been set ablaze as you gaze on the Savior, the subject of the Bible, the One who has loved you from Genesis to Revelation.

Jesus loves women, and because he loves them, he loves to teach them. He's your Rabboni, your beloved Teacher, your Bestie, and he wants to help you to see him, and to see yourself as part of his story. You are welcome here.



1

It's All about Him

“Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

Luke 24:32

Sure, I Believe in the Bible, But . . .

I'm so glad you're here. I'm glad that you've chosen to spend time listening for Jesus to speak his love for you through opening the Scriptures to you. I'm glad because I know that when he opens up your heart and mind, when he talks with you on your journey, you'll be transformed. You'll move from disillusionment, apathy, and confusion, to zeal, comfort, and joy.

But let's get really honest first: How long has it been since you felt a passion or excitement about spending time in the Word? Sure, you read the Bible, but when it's time to read the Bible,

do you anticipate that Jesus will feed you, or has Bible reading become a guilt-motivated duty? If that's what it has become to you, you'll struggle to get it done. And if spending time in the Bible is not something you do as much as you think you should, you wouldn't be alone. A recent Barna Research Group study found that although a majority of Americans hold a high view of the Scriptures, only slightly more than "one-third reads it once a week or more."¹

Why don't we read the Bible more? Sure, there are plenty of shiny things to distract us, not the least of which is social media. And it's also true that we are all really busy with home and family and work, but still, if we say that we believe the Bible is truly God's Word, why don't we make reading it a priority? *Could it be that we're disconnected from it because it seems so disconnected from us?* After all, what do those strange laws about blood sacrifices or odd predictions of doom have to do with getting the kids to ballet or baseball practice, or even the Christianity we've embraced? Could it be that the Bible, especially the Old Testament, seems pretty much irrelevant to our faith, maybe even a contradiction to the story of Jesus we've embraced? In addition, could it be that we're expecting the Bible to do or be something for us that was never intended? Is it possible we're not reading it like it was meant to be read? If so, we're not alone; even Jesus' disciples were mistaken, and their misunderstanding caused both confusion and discouragement.

Let's listen in now to the conversation Jesus had with his aunt Mary and uncle Cleopas on that first Easter Sunday. Here is Luke's account:

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking

with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see. And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:13-27

Imagine the scene: Mary, Cleopas' wife, had been one of the women who had been with Jesus in his ministry (Mark 15:40-41). Then she had stood with his mother Mary and Mary Magdalene to witness his execution (John 19:25). After the guards had taken his body down, she and her husband wept the Sabbath day away before leaving Jerusalem on Easter Sunday, brokenhearted and

disillusioned. Like other married couples, they probably talked out their grief, trying to process what they had just experienced. This must have been a fairly intense conversation because they didn't stop when a stranger joined them. "What are you talking about?" asked the stranger, who was actually the Lord. Assuming that he must have overheard some of their conversation, Cleopas responded, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what has happened during the last few days?" The stranger pressed them, "What things?"

Listen carefully now to Cleopas' response and see if you can picture yourself responding as they did. He said, "We had hoped he would. . ." It is in this part of the dialogue that we learn about the mistaken assumptions Cleopas (and all of the disciples) held. They had rightly recognized Jesus as a great prophet. They had heard him speak, they had seen his miracles. But they had also hoped that he was their Messiah, the One who would redeem Israel.

In order to understand their hopelessness, we need to see what kind of redemption they were expecting. Usually when Christians use the word *redemption*, they mean "freedom from sin" or "the gift of salvation." But that's not what these disciples were expecting. They were expecting national liberation. They thought Jesus would free them from the rule of the Romans.² But on that Friday, instead of being freed from the oppression of Rome, they watched as their "Deliverer" was condemned to death. Every hope of liberation from oppression was drowned beneath the blood-soaked ground of Golgotha. All of their assumptions had been wrong, and because of that they were miserable. The Scriptures no longer made sense to them. Of course they were "sad" (Luke 24:17).

Can you see how their misunderstanding of the Old Testament eventuated in grief and hopelessness? It had been from those

Scriptures that they had learned about the Messiah's redemption of Israel. Were the Scriptures false? Could God's Word be trusted?

But they were not only grieving and hopeless. They were also confused. Their confusion stemmed from the fact that some of the women testified that Jesus was actually alive. Even though he had foretold his resurrection on numerous occasions,³ his closest friends were completely dumbfounded. They didn't believe the women's report. Why? Because they held false assumptions. They completely misunderstood the Scriptures. Their faulty beliefs stopped them from hearing his words about his encroaching death, so of course they weren't comforted by his assurances of his resurrection. They had filtered all his words through their mistaken assumptions. They were shocked by his death, though he had foretold it numerous times. They were confused and doubtful about the resurrection, even when their friends testified to it. How could they have been so blind to Jesus' plan? Because they had willfully misread the Scriptures, they were foolish and unbelieving. From Genesis to Malachi they had gotten the entire Old Testament all wrong.

Learning a New Way to Read

It is easy to ask how they could have been so mistaken as to miss his clear teaching—and yet, we're very much like them. We think we know God's plans, the ways he works, the promises he's made, and then we find ourselves wandering down our own personal Emmaus road, wondering where we took a wrong turn, or if the Bible is even true at all. Like them, we're prone to misread the Scriptures.

Like us, even Jesus' closest friends had failed to understand that there was something, or rather *Someone*, who connected all the

law, histories, poems, and prophecies into one basic story, a story that was meant to give them hope and build their faith. Though they were steeped in the teachings of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets, they didn't know that the Scriptures weren't meant to show them how to *earn* God's favor, eternal life, or worldly success. Even though they loved him, they failed to see that the Scriptures were about Jesus and how *he* would earn God's favor for them. Of course they were grieving and confused. They were blind to their only source of hope.

With typical patience and love for his miserable friends, Jesus began his teaching at the beginning with the writings of Moses, and then worked his way through to "all the Prophets." He interpreted "to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27). But he didn't just reveal truth from the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible), or the Prophets (the last seventeen books of the Old Testament). These terms meant *all* the Old Testament Scriptures, for all the "patterns of God's activity again and again throughout the Old Testament looked forward to Jesus himself."⁴

Think about that. Jesus, a man who had read the Hebrew Scriptures from the time he was a child, interpreted the underlying meaning of everything he read as being about himself. That's a shockingly narcissistic thing to do. We would be right to question the reliability of such a statement—if the person who uttered it hadn't just risen from the dead. Mary and Cleopas had seen him die and now they heard his voice. Because Jesus rose from the dead, we can trust that his words are true: the entire Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, is his story, the story of his rescue mission of his beloved bride. It *is* all about him.

Mary and Cleopas weren't unique in misreading the Scriptures. Even his closest friends had wrongly assumed it presented the way

to *earn* eternal life and reestablish their nation as a world leader. But that wasn't Moses' or the prophets' message at all (John 5:39). Neither they nor their personal success were the theme of those ancient writings. *Jesus was*. He said, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me" (John 5:46).

Right about now you might be thinking: *Hold on a minute, Elyse! How could Jesus say that Moses wrote about him? Jesus hadn't yet been born when Moses wrote! How could he say that the Scriptures were all about him?* I understand that objection, and we'll spend the rest of this book answering it more fully, but for now let me just propose this: On that first Easter, in the first Sunday school, Jesus called his listeners (and us) to a new way of understanding his Word. In essence, he taught this one lesson:

You've been reading the Scriptures all wrong. You thought they were about you and your earthly glory and freedom from suffering. But they are actually about me: my suffering and my eventual glory. Every part of the Bible is all about me.

It would bring great relief to us if we consistently understood the Bible the way Jesus taught this little class to do. But like them, we misread the main message of the Bible. The Bible isn't about us. It isn't even primarily about God in a generic sense—though, of course, it does reveal the Trinity. Rather, it especially highlights the person and work of God the Son, Jesus Christ. Everything that's in there is there for one reason: It points to Jesus—who he is, what he's done, and our need for him, accomplished through his suffering and glory by the will of the Father and the power of the Spirit.

As I said, Jesus spent his entire life studying Moses' writings. He alone knew the true meaning of the Torah. He alone understood

that Moses had been writing about him. But he also knew that it wouldn't be until after his death and resurrection, when he walked among his family and friends and taught them again, that they would finally be willing to accept the truth about who he really is. So he patiently waited to teach them while they continued in their grief and confusion.

Welcome to Rabboni's Sunday School

Like those early disciples, we need help if we're going to see how God's Word (from both the Old and New Testaments) connects with our lives. We need to learn what the Bible is actually about and how its truth intersects with our struggle to live by faith today. We need to find answers to these questions:

- Is there one unifying story that binds all the other stories, poems, and prophecies together—not only with events during Jesus' life but also with my life in the here-and-now?
- How are the ancient histories, written thousands of years ago, thousands of miles from where I live, relevant to my life and belief in a post-Christian nation like America?
- Are the song lyrics that fill the Psalms or the wise words penned by Solomon in Proverbs actually meant to speak to me about my Savior and the life he's called me to live?
- Should I read the stories about the "heroes" of the Old Testament and conclude that I'm supposed to be like them? Are their stories put there to teach me a moral lesson, a kind of spiritual *Aesop's Fables*? Should I seek to emulate their lifestyle and then expect the same results they experienced?

To answer these questions, we need to read the Bible the way it was meant to be read—as *one big love story*. Though it contains sixty-six different books written over hundreds of years, the Bible is actually just one long love letter written from our Lord to us, his bride. We need to read it the way Jesus did: as *his* story. It is the story of his loving creation of a world that would tragically fall into rebellion and then be magnificently redeemed through his work on the cross, all to the praise of his glorious grace.

What He Taught Them

So starting with the books that Moses wrote, Jesus went through to the Prophets and “interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:27). In one afternoon’s stroll, Mary and Cleopas had their eyes opened to the fact that the Messiah was, in fact, right there throughout all the Scriptures they had studied all their lives. They were finally ready to hear his message. They came to it now in humility and with broken hearts, as people who had lost everything and who knew they didn’t have answers or any hope of political liberation. And that’s just the place they needed to be. They would never have been willing to hear it otherwise.

Are you ready, maybe even longing, to hear his message now? In the chapters to come, we’ll discover Jesus in the writings of Moses. We’ll see him in the historical narratives about the nation of Israel, and in the song lyrics that David (and others) penned about the Good Shepherd. We’ll see him standing before us in all the prophecies—those that obviously speak about a coming Messiah, but also in those that seem not to. We’ll learn what makes the Bible a vibrant story of love, rescue, and true redemption. And

we'll see Jesus standing there with us, continually reorienting our hearts toward him. Once we begin to see him like this, our hearts will burn with zeal, too, and perhaps we'll actually look forward to reading the Word again, because we know that when we do, we'll find him there: the Lover of our souls.

One Woman with Eyes to See

We've spent a lot of time in this chapter talking about the disillusionment, confusion, and apathy Jesus' disciples (and we) suffer. We've seen that Jesus loved to teach truth, especially to women, and that without the reorientation he brought we will always try to make the Bible about us instead of about him. And that perspective will cause us to struggle to even want to read his Word.

There was, however, one woman who understood his message of suffering *before* glory. We read about her in John 12: "Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair" (v. 3).

While Martha was busy preparing dinner and the other disciples sat around waiting to eat it, one person, a woman, Mary of Bethany, anointed him with a precious perfume. Judas, the greedy glory hog, rebuked her for wasting money. But Jesus came to her defense. "Let her alone," he chided. "She's anticipating and honoring the day of my burial" (John 12:7 THE MESSAGE). While everyone else was focused on getting dinner (and plotting their great success), Mary was at his feet, loving him, worshiping him, and preparing his body for his burial. Perhaps she sensed what was about to happen. Maybe his message of suffering before glory had found a niche in her heart because she was a woman who didn't

have anything left to lose. She was single and childless. She was wholly dependent upon the care of her brother Lazarus, whom she had already buried once. She knew her position was precarious.

Maybe she understood Jesus' message of suffering before glory in ways that others couldn't, learning it during those dark days when Lazarus lay dying and her beloved Teacher ignored her. She had lived through days of tears and despair, concluding that all was lost. But she had also tasted glory when her despair turned into joy, as Jesus cried, "Lazarus, come out" (John 11:43). Mary learned then that suffering came before glory. She had lived it, and she knew that she would soon live it again in his death. Even though she believed in Jesus' ultimate resurrection in eternity, she went with spices on Easter to cover the odor of his decaying body. But on that morning she would be astounded by glory.

For a second time, we see the Lord defending his dear student, follower, and friend. Jesus never rebuked a woman who loved him, who loved to learn from him, who expressed love for him. He won't rebuke you, either.

Perhaps as you come to him now you can confess to belonging to that group of believing women who rarely read the Bible. Maybe you've sadly admitted that though you love Jesus and believe his Word is good, you haven't been able to make the connection between it and the life you're living. Perhaps you're beginning to see that you've missed the main point, the big picture that Jesus spoke of. Maybe that's because you've wanted to arrange your life the way you've dreamt it would be and you've looked to the Bible to help you do that. Or maybe it's simply because you've never heard that every part of the Bible is actually about him.

In the pages that follow, we'll consider Jesus' words from Luke 24 more closely and make connections from them to our lives and to the faith we love. In the meantime, though, let me encourage

you not only to answer the questions below but also to pray that your heart and mind would be opened to see that the whole Bible testifies of him.

OPEN BIBLE, OPEN HEART

1. Do you believe the Bible is actually God's Word? Why or why not?

2. Honestly consider how much time you spend reading the Bible. If you don't read it regularly, are you able to identify the reasons why you don't? Does it seem disconnected or confusing? Are there other things that distract you or seem more important?

3. Have you ever read the Old Testament? What did you think of it? (Be honest!)

4. Spend time in prayer now, asking the Lord to open your heart and mind to truth.

5. In four or five sentences, summarize what you've learned in this chapter.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

I. After rereading Luke 24:13–27, answer the following questions:

- What's the setting for this story (time/place)?

- Who are the main characters?

- Are there any secondary characters?

- What do the main characters say?

- Summarize Cleopas' confession of disappointment, disillusionment, and confusion. (Hint: "We had hoped he was . . ." and "Some of the women . . .")

- Summarize Jesus' teaching in response.

- How did Jesus characterize these disciples' misunderstanding?

- What did he say their problem was?

- Can you identify the primary point of Jesus' teaching in this passage? If so, what is it?

2. Jesus said Moses wrote of him. What do you think he meant? Can you think of any place where he did? (Help: Deuteronomy 18:15)

3. Jesus talked about suffering before glory—something that Mary of Bethany likely understood. Is that your understanding of the Bible's message? Why or why not?
