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MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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GETTING STARTED

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THIS STUDY

Noah, the woman at the well, Thomas, Hagar; these men and women are more than just names in Bible stories. They are flesh-and-blood people. And seeing how God moves in their lives can help us see God moving in ours. We can hear God call us by name.

Named is a six-week small group resource that tells the stories of people from Scripture through a new lens—exploring the mystery of faith with a literary touch. Each series introduces six different stories of people from the Bible, unpacking one story every week.

This discussion guide provides you with everything you need to lead a discussion each week. This is a unique opportunity for your group to engage the Scriptures both personally and as a community. Through the power of history-based stories, you'll see the truth of how God works, not just in ancient times and in other people, but today, and in us all. Become acquainted with the people identified by God in a story as particular as yours.

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THIS BOOK

Each chapter in this book includes the following components to help you lead a discussion.



Preparation

This section gives you the Scripture reference to review the story from God's Word and prepare.

Opening Discussion

These are just a few questions to get your group thinking about the story and start putting themselves in the place of the person in the story.

Introduction

Here's where you introduce the story to the group, briefly recapping the scriptures.

Context

In this section, historical, societal, and religious background information is given to help readers put themselves in the shoes of those whose stories they are about to read.

Story and Questions

Provided on the DVD are audio versions of the stories. You may choose either to listen to the audio as a group or to read it out loud together. Following this, there are questions provided to elicit conversation within the group.

Video and Prayer of Consecration

The videos are designed to give one last thought to take away as the group departs. There is a closing prayer you may also choose to use.



THE DISILLUSIONMENT

KEY SCRIPTURE PASSAGES:
John 19:38-42; Luke 23:55-56



PREPARATION

Read Mary's story from Scripture as well as the narrative from the workbook to familiarize yourself with it. You also may want to read over the sections below ahead of time and preview the video.



OPENING DISCUSSION—5 MINUTES

Begin your time together by asking these questions to get everyone thinking:

1. If you've ever experienced a stage of extreme doubt in your faith, share with the group what happened to shake your faith and how you got past it.
2. Perhaps you haven't had a phase of extreme doubt but you have watched someone else go through it. Describe what it feels like to hurt for and with someone as they search and seem to find no answers.

INTRODUCTION

Briefly recap Mary's story from Scripture with your group. Use the following context to help.

HER CONTEXT—10 MINUTES

Everything Mary has based her entire faith and life on since the angel appeared to her in the dream has been shaken by the death of Jesus. Before Jesus's resurrection and victory over death, death was something very final and resolute. In fact, the only exceptions to this rule were exceptions that Jesus himself made—with Lazarus, and with a few other characters sprinkled throughout the New Testament. And now Jesus, who brought others back to life, has died, and Mary no longer has reason to hope or



believe that anything from her thirty-three-year-old dream was legitimate.

Jesus is dead. Hope is dead. Life, as Mary knows it, is dead.

HER STORY—10 MINUTES

You may choose to read aloud as a group or listen to the audio of the narrative of Mary, or you may have done this before class. Take a few minutes to talk about the narrative. What stood out? What was new information or information presented from a new perspective?

THE STORY FINDS ITS PLACE IN ME— 15 MINUTES

Use some or all of these questions to elicit conversation within the group. Your group may also want to share some of their reflections from the questions in the workbook. Do either or both as time allows.

1. A common refrain when someone dies before they reach their sixties is, “S/he died too young.” And yet the world—or parts of it, at least—can be changed or affected by young people even after they have died. Consider: Anne Frank; Steve Jobs; Sylvia Plath; Abraham Lincoln; John F. Kennedy; Martin Luther King Jr. How is the world different for the impact these people’s lives—and also their deaths—have made upon it? What others can you think of?



2. Have you personally known someone who died young? If so, describe how that person's death—though grievous at the time—has changed your or someone else's perspective about the world.
3. Near the end of the story in the workbook, John lights the *shiva* candle, which breaks the rules of mourning in the Jewish religion. Discuss the likelihood of this actually happening. Is this a believable turn in the story? What would be a parallel for us today? What is something we usually do (or don't do) out of reverence, respect, or adherence to our religious codes, that deep grief might cause us to disregard? (Think about sacraments, rituals, observances, traditions, etc.)

VIDEO—10 MINUTES

Watch the video together and discuss.

PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Lord God, we thank you that death is not the end. We thank you that you have overcome not only death but also doubt. We struggle to trust in you sometimes. Thank you for your patience and your understanding of our human condition. Walk with us as we navigate our broken world, waiting for your redemption and restoration of all things. In the meantime, help us remember Jesus's victory on the cross, and the victory that will one day be ours too.

