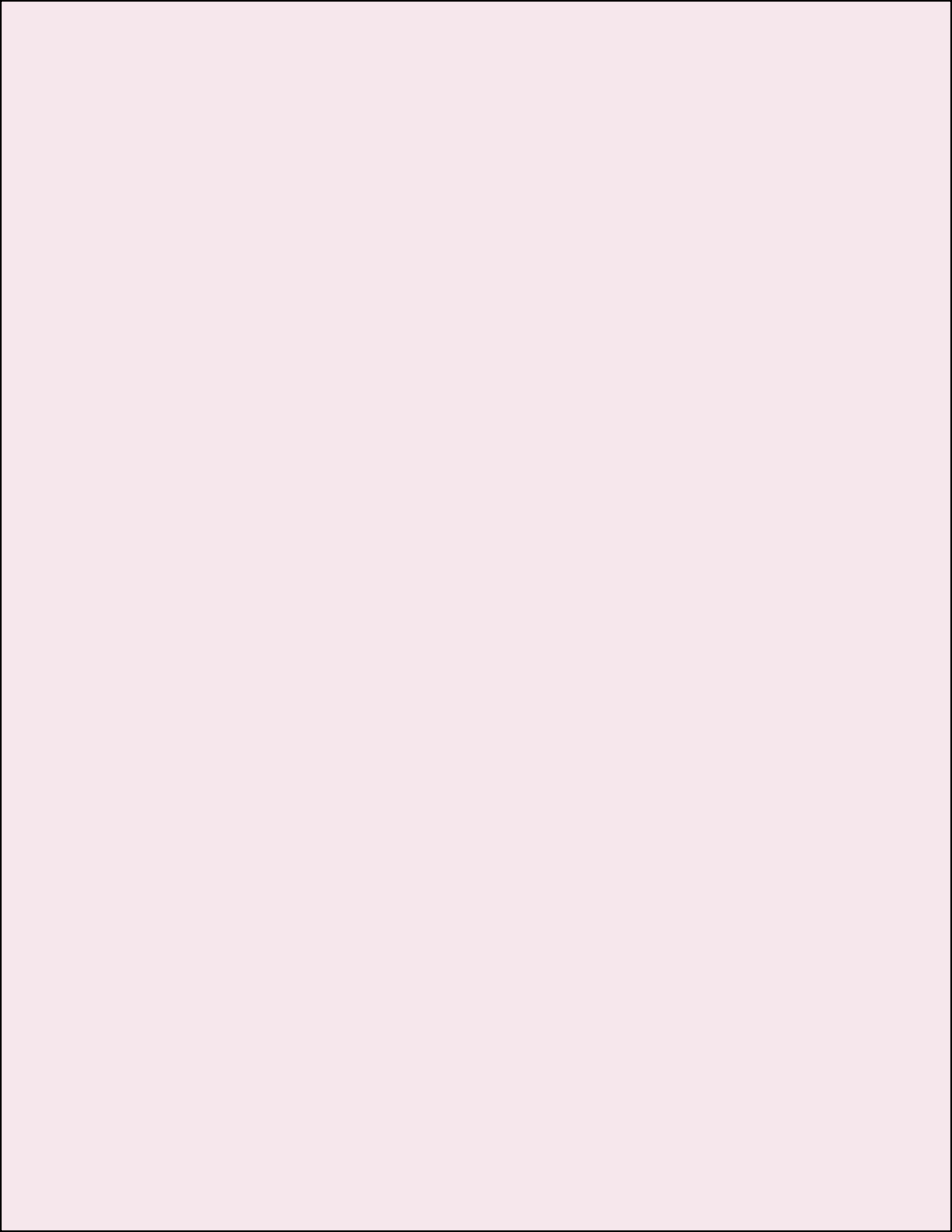




java club

[**level 3 : espresso : faithful women**]
an interactive *storying* Bible study.



[level 3 : espresso : *faithful women*]

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Java Club, an interactive storying Bible study. We hope that you will be able to encounter God in fresh ways as you find your place in the greatest story ever told.

This story set is just one of many sets to be produced as we seek to use the stories of God's Word to instruct, correct, and inspire. Specifically, this set is designed to share the stories of women in the Bible who displayed great faith. We pray that as you internalize these stories, you will get a fresh vision of how God can use you for His Kingdom. It is by no means comprehensive, and neither is it meant to be. This study is intentionally designed to be flexible. Use it however you wish—as an evangelistic discovery group, as a home Bible study, as a Sunday School curriculum—anything.

While formal training is not necessary for Bible storying, we do recommend you walk through the training material on our website, <www.thejavaclub.org>. Click on *Training*, where you will find specific directions on how to use this study effectively. Since this is a "level 3: espresso" study, you will find that there are no discussion questions included. You are on your own to lead discussion based on these stories, but we suggest the following questions:

What did you like or not like about the story?

What made the woman or women in this story so great?

Who do you relate to in this story?

What can we learn about God in this story?

How does God want you to obey what you learned from this story?

Another hope of ours is that, in discovering Bible storying, you will be exposed to how this method is being used all around the world. We pray that God will grip your heart with the power of His story, and the great need that exists to tell this story in so many places. Please take the time to pray with us that God will use this study in your hearts, and that He will make His name (and His story) known throughout every tongue and tribe. If you are interested in partnering with us to reach the world for Christ, please go to <www.thejavaclub.org/movement>. To Him be the glory!

Sincerely,

The  Team

 The logo for Story Runners features the words "Story Runners" in a stylized, green, cursive font. The "S" is large and loops around the "tory". To the right of the text is a green silhouette of a person running, with arms and legs extended.

STORY 1: COURAGE

At one point in history, God's people, the Israelites, were living in Egypt. Because they had significantly grown in number, the king of Egypt, Pharaoh, got scared. He told the Egyptians, "There are too many of those Israelites in our country, and they are becoming more powerful than we are. If we don't outsmart them, their families will keep growing larger. And if our country goes to war, they could easily fight on the side of our enemies and escape from Egypt." So the Egyptians put slave masters over them to oppress them with hard labor building cities for Pharaoh.

But the more the Egyptians oppressed the Hebrews, the more they multiplied and spread. Because of this, the Egyptians hated them worse than before and made them work so hard that their lives were absolutely miserable.

Finally, the Pharaoh called in two women named Shiphrah and Puah, who were midwives, and he told them, "If a Hebrew woman gives birth to a girl, let the child live. If the baby is a boy, kill him!"

Shiphrah and Puah listened carefully to the words of Pharaoh but they feared God more than Pharaoh. So they did not do what the king told them to do. They let the boy babies live.

Now when the king heard what was happening, that the boy babies were allowed to live, he called the midwives to him again and asked them: "Why have you disobeyed me? Why have you let the boy babies live?"

Cleverly the midwives answered Pharaoh, "Why, Hebrew women are not at all like the Egyptian women. They are strong and give birth quickly, even before the midwife arrives!"

So God blessed Shiphrah and Puah because they truly respected Him and did what was right. And God gave the midwives families of their own.

God continued to bless the Hebrew people and they became even more numerous.

STORY 2: KINDNESS

After Moses died, Joshua became the new leader of the Israelites. He sent two men as spies across the river into the land of Canaan to spy out the city of Jericho. The men went and entered into the house of a prostitute named Rahab and stayed there.

But someone found out about them and told the king of Jericho that some spies had come that night to spy out the land. So he sent some soldiers to Rahab's house, who demanded, "Let us have the men who are staying at your house. They are spies."

But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them on the roof. She told the soldiers, "Yes, the men came to me but I did not know where they came from. At sunset, when it was time to close the city gate, the men left. I don't know which way they went. If you hurry, you might be able to catch them."

After the soldiers had left, Rahab went back up to the roof and told the spies, "I know that the Lord has given this land to you. Great fear of your people has fallen over us, so that everyone here is melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the sea when you came out of Egypt, and how the Lord helped you defeat the peoples living east of the river. When we heard of it, our hearts sank and everyone's courage failed. For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below. Now please show kindness to my family because I have shown kindness to you. Please give me a sign that when you return you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and their families."

"Our lives for your lives!" the men assured her. "If you keep quiet about what we are doing, we promise to be kind to you when the Lord gives us the land."

So the woman let the men down safely by a rope through the window, since her house was part of the city wall. The men told her, "Take this red cord and tie it to your window when we attack and make sure your entire family is in the house. If they are not in the house, we will not be responsible."

"I'll do exactly what you said," Rahab replied.

Later when Joshua led the Israelites to attack the city of Jericho he said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the prostitute's house and bring her and all her family out, just like you promised her." So the young men brought out Rahab, her father and mother, her brothers and all their families. Then they destroyed the city and all who lived in it.

Afterward, one of the Israelites named Salmon married Rahab and they had a son named Boaz.

STORY 3: TROUBLED

There was a certain man named Elkanah who lived in the north hill country of Israel. Elkanah had two wives, Hannah, who had no children, and Peninnah, who had many.

Once a year, Elkanah went from his hometown to the Temple in Shiloh to worship. Whenever he would offer his sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and all her sons and daughters. But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her and the Lord had closed her womb. Peninnah liked to make Hannah feel miserable about not having any children, especially when the family went to the house of the Lord each year.

One day, when Elkanah saw that Hannah was crying and refusing to eat, he said to her, "Hannah, why are you crying? Why don't you eat? Why do you feel so bad? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

After the sacrifice and meal, Hannah got up and went to pray. Eli, the priest, was sitting in his chair near the door to the place of worship. Hannah was brokenhearted and was crying as she prayed, "Lord All-Powerful, I am your servant, but I am so miserable! Please let me have a son. I will give him to you for as long as he lives."

Hannah prayed silently to the Lord for a long time. But her lips were moving, and Eli thought she was drunk. "How long are you going to stay drunk?" he asked. "Sober up!"

"Not so," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking and I am not drunk. I was pouring out my soul to the Lord. I've been praying all this time, telling the LORD about my problems."

Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may God give you what you have asked for." Then Hannah left and after she ate something, she felt better.

After Hannah returned to their home, the Lord blessed her with a son. She named him Samuel.

The next year, she did not go with Elkanah to worship. She told him, "After he is old enough to stop nursing, I will take him and present him before the Lord, and he will live there for the rest of his life." "Do what seems best to you," Elkanah replied.

So after the boy stopped nursing, Hannah took him, along with an animal for sacrifice, and brought Samuel to the house of the Lord. She said to Eli the priest, "I prayed for this child, and the Lord gave me what I asked for. So now I give him to the Lord."

STORY 4: MERCY

During the days when Ahab was king of Israel, many people turned away from the God of Israel and worship the false gods. Elijah the prophet of God said there would be no rain in the land for the next few years except at his command. This was God's judgment upon the people for abandoning their God. For a time Elijah hid in a cave near a small stream where each day the Lord sent ravens to feed him. After some time, the stream dried up because there was no rain. Then the Lord said to Elijah, "Go at once to Zarephath and stay there. I have told a widow there to give you food."

When Elijah came to the town gate, a widow (who was not an Israelite) was there gathering sticks for a fire. He asked, "Would you bring me a cup of water?" And as she was going to get it, he asked, "Would you also please bring me a piece of bread?"

"As surely as the Lord your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread. All I have is a handful of flour and a little olive oil. I'm on my way home now with these few sticks to cook what I have for my son and me. After that, we will starve to death."

Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do what you said. But first, please make a small piece of bread and bring it to me. The Lord has promised that your jar of flour won't run out and your bottle of oil won't dry up before he sends rain for the crops."

She went away and did exactly what Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. The flour and oil never ran out.

Sometime later the son of the woman got sick. He kept getting worse, and finally, he died. The woman said to Elijah, "What have I done to you? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

"Bring me your son," Elijah replied. He took him to an upstairs room where he was staying and laid him on his bed. Then Elijah cried out to the Lord, "O Lord, why have you brought this tragedy upon this widow I am staying with, causing her son to die?" Then the prophet stretched himself over the boy three times and cried to the Lord, "O Lord, my God, let this boy's life return to him!"

The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy started breathing again. Elijah carried the boy down to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!" Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that you really do speak for the Lord."

STORY 5: WATER

One day, Jesus and his followers were travelling through Samaria. Most Jews avoided going through Samaria because they didn't like the Samaritans. Along the way, they came to a village and stopped at a well. Jesus was tired from the journey so he sat down by the well to rest.

Soon after, a Samaritan woman came to get some water from the well. When she got close, Jesus asked her, "Will you give me a drink?" "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman," she said, "How can you ask me for a drink?" Jesus answered her, "You don't know what God wants to give you, and you don't know who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would ask me for living water."

"But, sir," the woman said, "you don't even have a bucket, and the well is deep. Where are you going to get this living water? Our ancestor Jacob dug this well for us, and his family and animals got water from it. Are you greater than Jacob?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. But whoever drinks the water I give him will never get thirsty again. The water I give is like a flowing fountain that gives eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, please give me a drink of that water! Then I won't get thirsty and have to come to this well again."

So Jesus told her, "Go and bring your husband." But the woman said, "I don't have a husband." "That's the truth," Jesus said, "for you've had five husbands and the man you now live with is not your husband."

The woman was astonished and said, "I can see that you are a prophet!" But quickly she challenged him by saying, "My ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews say Jerusalem is the only place to worship."

Then Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you won't worship either on this mountain or in Jerusalem. You Samaritans don't really know the one you worship. But we Jews do know the God we worship, and by using us, God will save the world. Yet a time is coming when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. These are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." The woman said, "I know that the Messiah will come. He is the one we call Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I am the Messiah."

The woman left her water jar and ran back to town to tell the people, "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could he be the Messiah?" So people came out of the town to see Jesus and begged him to stay with them a few days. Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony. But others said, "We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

STORY 6: MIRACLE

One day, Jesus got into the boat and crossed Lake Galilee. Then as he stood on the shore, a large crowd gathered around him. The person in charge of the Jewish meeting place was also there. His name was Jairus, and when he saw Jesus, he went over to him. He knelt at Jesus' feet and started begging him for help. He said, "My daughter is about to die! Please come and touch her, so she will get well and live." She was his only daughter, a girl of about twelve years of age. So Jesus went with Jairus.

As Jesus was on his way the large crowd followed and pressed around him. In the crowd was a woman who had been bleeding for twelve years. She had gone to many doctors, and they had not done anything except cause her a lot of pain. She had paid them all the money she had. But instead of getting better, she only got worse.

The woman had heard about Jesus, and so she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his clothes, because she thought, "If I can just touch his clothes, I will be healed." As soon as she touched them, her bleeding stopped, and she knew she was well.

Immediately, Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

His disciples said to him, "Look at all these people crowding around you! How can you ask who touched you?" But Jesus turned to see who had touched him.

Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at Jesus' feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, "You are now well because of your faith. May God give you peace! You are healed, and you will no longer be in pain."

While Jesus was still speaking some men came from the house of Jairus saying, "Your daughter is dead. Why bother the teacher any more?" But Jesus ignored their words and said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

When Jesus arrived at the house of Jairus he saw a commotion with people crying and wailing loudly as they mourned. "Stop this crying and wailing," Jesus said, "The child isn't dead. She is just asleep." But the people just laughed at him.

After Jesus had put all the people out of the house, he took three of his disciples and the dead girl's mother and father and went to where the child was. Jesus took the girl by the hand and said to her, "Little girl, get up!" Immediately her spirit returned, she stood up and walked around. The parents were completely astonished. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat and ordered her parents not to tell anyone what had happened. But news of it quickly spread through all that region.

STORY 7: FAITH

On this particular occasion, Jesus had journeyed out of Israel to a place near the city of Tyre where he stayed at someone's home. He did not want people to know he was there, but they found out anyway.

A woman whose daughter had an evil spirit in her heard where Jesus was. And right away she came and knelt down at his feet. The woman was Greek and had been born in the part of Syria known as Phoenicia. The woman came to him crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession." She begged Jesus to force the demon out of her daughter.

Jesus did not say a word. But the woman kept following along and shouting, so his disciples came up and asked him to send her away. Finally Jesus answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

The woman came closer. Then she knelt down and begged, "Please help me, Lord!"

But Jesus told her, "It isn't right to take food away from children and feed it to dogs." Jesus said this to test her. He was saying that his first mission was to the Israelites, then to others. But the woman cleverly replied, "Yes, Lord, that's true, but even dogs get the crumbs that fall from their owner's table." For she was willing to take whatever Jesus would give her.

Then Jesus replied to her, "Woman, you have great faith! You have been given what you requested. You may return home now, the demon has left your daughter."

And her daughter was healed from that very hour. She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon was gone.

STORY 8: LOVE

One day, Jesus was invited to have dinner with Simon, who was a teacher of the religious law. So Jesus went to Simon's home and sat down to eat with him.

In the town, there was a woman who was known as the village harlot, and when she learned that Jesus was at Simon's house, she got an expensive bottle of perfume and found the house. She came in and stood behind Jesus, weeping and wetting his feet with her tears. Then, she wiped his feet with her hair, kissed them, and poured her perfume on them.

When Simon saw this, he muttered to himself, "If this Jesus really was the prophet I thought he was, he would have known what kind of woman this is who is falling all over him."

Jesus said to him, "Simon, I've got something to tell you."

Simon replied, "Teacher, what is it?"

Jesus told him, "Two men were in debt to a banker. One owed five hundred silver coins and the other owed fifty. Neither of the men had the money to pay it back, so the banker decided to cancel both debts. Which of the two men will love the banker more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the biggest debt canceled."

"That's right," Jesus said. Then, turning to the woman but speaking to Simon, Jesus said, "Do you see this woman? When I came into your house, you didn't give me any water to wash my feet. But she washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I came in, she hasn't stopped kissing my feet. You gave me nothing to freshen up, but she has poured perfume on my feet. So, I tell you that all her many sins have been forgiven, and that's why she has shown great love. But he who has been forgiven little, loves little."

Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

At this, the other guests started saying to one another, "Who does he think he is, forgiving sins?"

But Jesus told the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

STORY 9: BEAUTIFUL

It was now six days before the Jewish feast of the Passover when many people came to Jerusalem for the feast and to worship at the Temple. Jesus arrived at Bethany where his friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. This was the same Lazarus that Jesus had raised from the dead.

So Jesus was eating in Bethany at the home of Simon, who once had leprosy. Martha was there serving the food while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Jesus.

Mary entered the room with an alabaster jar (about a liter) of a very expensive and sweet-smelling perfume. She poured it on Jesus' head and also on his feet and then she wiped his feet with her hair. The whole house was filled with the sweet fragrance of the perfume.

But when his disciples saw this, they became angry and complained, "Why such a waste? We could have sold this perfume for a lot of money and given it to the poor." Then they started saying cruel things to the woman.

Jesus told them, "Leave her alone! Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing for me. You will always have the poor with you. And whenever you want to, you can give to them. But you won't always have me here with you. She has done all she could by pouring perfume on my body to prepare it for burial."

And then Jesus said, "You may be sure that wherever the good news is told all over the world, people will remember what she has done. And they will tell others."

STORY 10: INVITATION

After Jesus' death and resurrection, many people began to believe in Him, trusting God that Jesus had taken the penalty for their disobedience. The Gospel spread as the first missionaries took the news about Jesus to foreign lands.

Once, a missionary named Paul was in Troas, a city in modern-day Turkey, when he had a dream. In his dream, a man from Macedonia called out, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" So Paul and his companions set out for Europe for the first time.

When they arrived in Macedonia they went to Philippi, the main city in that area and, even more importantly, a Roman colony. They stayed there several days.

One day, they left the city and went down along the river where they had heard about a prayer meeting. They showed up and sat down to talk with some women there. One woman, whose name was Lydia, was a dealer in expensive textiles, and she was known to be a woman who believed in God.

They told Lydia about Jesus and how she could have a relationship with God through trusting in Jesus, and they invited her to believe. As she listened with intensity to what was being said, God gave her a trusting heart—and she believed!

She decided that she wanted to know God personally and she asked to be baptized, which is a tradition that symbolizes new life. After she was baptized, along with everyone in her household, she told the men, "If you think I really do have faith in the Lord, come stay in my home and be my guests." So the whole group stayed in her house and taught her more about Jesus.

Before they left the city, Paul and his companions went back to Lydia's house, where they met with other believers and encouraged them. God's message of redemption spread throughout Europe from Lydia's house and beyond.



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