

# The Life Challenge

*"I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." John 10:10*

**Series:** Gifted, Called & Affirmed  
**Title:** Women in *The Way*: Jesus' Encounters With Women in the Gospels  
**Speaker:** Karen Hiebert  
**Date:** January 20, 2019



## WARM-UP

### **"The Son of Man" by Charles L. O'Donnell**

*He lit the lily's lamp of snow, and fired the rose's sunset heart,  
He timed the light's long ebb and flow, and drove the coursing winds apart.  
He gathered armfuls of the dew, and shook it over earth again,  
He spread the heaven's cloth of blue, and topped the fields with plenteous grain.  
He tuned the stars to minstrelsy, as twilight soft, as bird song wild,  
Who learned beside His Mother's knee, His prayers like any other child.*

In her teaching Karen sketched the life of Mary the mother of Jesus. Imagine the experience of being the mother of God-incarnate as he was growing and maturing under her care.

- What kinds of things would Mary likely have been Jesus' teacher about?
- What do you think those experiences were like for Mary, given that she had insight into who Jesus really was?

## DISCUSSION

Over the last two weekends we have seen how, in Jesus day, women:

- Experienced restrictions on freedom and autonomy
- Were often scapegoats, especially in sexual matters
- Were vulnerable to unscrupulous legal practices
- Were kept from serious rabbinic teaching
- Were generally not spoken to by men in public, and especially not alone
- Experienced unique challenges from men under the purity code
- Did not have the same rights and privileges under the law as men
- Would not be physically touched by a Rabbi
- Were not considered to be authoritative witnesses in the way men were

*"Jesus challenged many social conventions of the time that had the effect of confining and limiting women, and he enacted women to see themselves - and men - truthfully, all so they could thrive together as part of God's restored people." Karen Hiebert*

Read the following stories about encounters Jesus had with women and answer the following two questions about each:

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## DISCUSSION

1. What does the story reveal about Jesus as he relates to the woman (women) in the story, or intervenes in their situation?
2. How would the central woman (or women) in the story have experienced the encounter?
  - Luke 7:36-50
  - Luke 8:40-56
  - Luke 10:38-42
  - Luke 13:10-17
  - John 8:2-11

*"Jesus came to earth not primarily as a male but as a person. He treated women not primarily as females but as human beings." Scanzoni and Hardesty*

- Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why?

Karen asked a set of questions to finish her teaching. Print off the following page and distribute a set of questions to each person/couple in your Life Group.

Share which of those statements, or images, of encounters women had with Jesus most expresses the need you have regarding an encounter with Jesus of your own right now (you don't need to explain why unless you choose to; you are free to simply share which experience you most long for).

Take time to pray for one another, that God would indeed give each person in your group the experience that they have identified a need for.

- Will we, like Mary of Nazareth, choose to trust despite the unknown?
- Will we, like the outsider Samaritan woman, come to recognize that we are indeed thirsty and in need of this Living Water?
- Will we, like the woman caught in sin, accept forgiveness, turn from our sin and fear no stoning from anyone?
- Will we approach Jesus like the hemorrhaging woman to risk all—no matter what?
- Will we, like the woman crippled for 18 year, know the compassion and power of Jesus who works to unbend us and create new life?
- Will we be delivered, like Mary Magdalene, from the enemy's grasp in order to live a freed life?
- Will we, like Mary of Bethany, be a disciple of Jesus?

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