

Questions for discussion Groups and Prayers

Episode 1 Discussion Questions: (Suggested Reading: Luke 8:1-3)

1. In chapter 8, the gospel of Luke says Jesus is travelling around proclaiming the good news with his apostles and “also some women.” What’s your impression of the reference to “also some women?”
2. Mary has gotten a bad wrap – what motivations lie behind the negative take on Mary? Name some unfair smear campaigns happening today. What’s behind them?
3. Why has Christianity been so hung up on sin? How do you define sin? How do you define grace?
4. Is thinking about Mary as a sex worker liberating for you? What about focusing on her as the first person to meet the risen Christ? Or the apostle to the apostles? Or the church’s guiding light?
5. Which portrayal of Mary Magdalene are you most drawn to and why?

Episode 1 Prayer:

Deliver me from my daily exclusions, O God
The ones that sound like “And also some women”
Turn my attention to the lesser-known leaders
And also the dismissed prophets
And also the unsung heroes
So that by basking in their light
My own might shine a little brighter
Amen.

Episode 2 Discussion Questions: (Suggested Reading: Judges 16:1-22)

1. Why do you think some Bible stories are told in more detail than others? Why do these details matter so much?
2. In what ways does Jezebel fail to conform? Name women in your life who don’t conform. What do you learn from them?
3. Delilah is blamed for Samson’s downfall despite the fact that he played fast and loose with God’s rules and suffered as a consequence. Where in the world are women being blamed for decisions made by men?
4. Salome gets caught in the crossfire of politics. Have you ever gotten caught in a political crossfire? What did you learn from that experience that you carry forward in your life?
5. “Sex is the least interesting thing happening in their [the womens’] stories,” Junia Joplin says in the podcast. What do you think are the most interesting aspects of each of these stories? How do they inform how you want to live?

Episode 2 Prayer:

Renew my perspectives, holy one
Broaden my understanding
Enlighten my being
Remove my rush to judgment
Restrain my careless words
Form within me not only the knowledge of divine goodness
But the desire to see her come to life
In my life
Here and now
Amen.

Episode 3 Discussion Questions: (Suggested Reading: Luke 1:46-55)

1. What are the first words that come to mind when you think of the Virgin Mary? Reflect on the words you have come up with. Why those words? Where have you formed your impressions of Mary?
2. How did Mary's politics inform Jesus' ministry?
3. Prophet, priest, God bearer... What words best capture who Mary is for you?
4. What perceptions of Mary have and are used to "keep women in their place?"
5. What do you think is the most subversive message in the Magnificat? What would change in the world if Mary's song came to life?

Episode 3 Prayer:

May my soul magnify you, O God
May I meet each new day
with a desire to live my best life
When the evening closes in
may I feel that I have given my all in the service of love
And in the countless moments between
—the ones that make up my one, blessed life—
May my soul magnify you, O God.
Amen.

Episode 4 Discussion Questions: (Suggested Reading: Judges 4-5)

1. Who do you think are the Bible's heaviest female hitters? Which one inspires you most and why?
2. When have transition periods led to women's empowerment throughout history? When have you become more of who you are during a period of change?
3. What's the most intriguing aspect of Deborah's story?

4. Consider the way Jael is gendered in the Bible. What lessons about gender roles does the story hold?
5. What does Christianity miss out on by not taking these “heavy hitters” seriously?

Episode 4 Prayer:

Merciful God, disrupt my life with deep questions.
Give me courage to ask:
Who am I not listening to?
Who am I leaving out?
Whose leadership do I take for granted?
Whose story is not being told?
Whose gifts don't I appreciate?
Prompt me to dig into my assumptions and judgments
Not so I feel the burden of guilt or shame
But so I can grow to embrace the potential for grace
In each being I encounter
And each story that informs my own.
Amen.

Episode 5 Discussion Questions: (Suggested Reading: Genesis 3:1-24)

1. When you think of Eve, what words spring to mind?
2. Do you like the idea of Adam as a lonely, androgynous android and Eve as the first trans woman? Why/Why not?
3. What tempts you? When you are tempted, do you minimize and rationalize? What helps you resist temptation?
4. Adam and Eve both play the blame game when they are caught disobeying God. Who is typically blamed when people try to play God and things go awry?
5. If gender inequality is the “product of the cursed world” as Junia says, then what is the product of a blessed world? What can you do to contribute to a blessed world?

Episode 5 Prayer:

This blessed world
In which I live, move and have my being
This blessed world
I'm called to care for
To enjoy and cherish
This blessed world
That holds so much wonder
That is my home
This blessed world
That you have set in motion, Creator God

To orient all of life
To orient my life
Blessing me
Blessing us
For this blessed world
My heart wells with gratitude
Thank you
Amen.