



Shelby Christian Church

FOLLOWING JESUS: MOTHERS OF FAITH

LUKE 1:26-38, 7:36-8:3, JOHN 11:17-44, LUKE 23:26-28,48-49, 55; 24:1-10 * 5/10/2026

MAIN POINT

All women have the chance to be mothers of the faith.

INTRODUCTION

Who have been the most influential women in your life? How have they shaped who you are?

Who are a few women in the Bible that God used in a significant way? Which woman's story resonates with yours the most?

In the first century, one of the things that separated the Christian faith from other prevalent religions is the dignity and worth Christianity assigned to women. The Scriptures declare that all people, men and women, are made in the image of God and, as such, have equality and worth. Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (1:1-17) included four women, which would have been highly unusual at the time. From the very beginning of God's redemptive work we see women play a vital role. Today we will look at mothers of the faith and see what they teach us about disciple making.

UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 1:26-38

Describe Mary's initial reaction to the angel Gabriel (v. 29). What does the angel tell Mary about her relationship with God?

To be an effective discipler of others, what must first be true of your own relationship with God?

What was God asking of Mary, and what stands out to you about her response?

Mary's humility towards God put her in a position to receive God's best for her life. Why does God value a humble and obedient heart? What impact might this have had on Jesus to observe growing up?

In the angel's opening statement to Mary, he referred to her as "favored" (v. 28), and in verse 30, he added that it was God with whom she had found favor. God's favor was evidence of His grace in Mary's life. Knowing God's purpose and submitting to that purpose are two different matters. Mary was at that crossroads of decision where she had to submit or reject. Her response was forthright—she referred to herself as God's servant, or slave. Mary expressed complete submission to God as His will for her life. Mary's faith was a ready faith that not only accepted God's will, but agreed wholeheartedly with what God was about to accomplish.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 7:36-8:3.

What can we learn about discipleship and devotion from the example of these women?

How was the “sinful woman” minimized by Simon? What was he missing about what was necessary to be a disciple?

Jesus’ parable helped Simon understand that love grows out of forgiveness. The more a person understands and appreciates his or her debt, the more that person will appreciate forgiveness. The natural response is to love the one who forgives, just as our love for Jesus grows out of having received forgiveness from Him. Jesus showed love in guiding Simon to see both the woman and her extravagant care. Jesus did not stop with emphasizing the rightness of the woman’s action. He also prompted Simon to contrast his own lack of gratitude. The second set of women in Luke 8 gave freely of their finances to support the work of the kingdom. Both sets of women gave to Jesus of their devotion, resources, and lives.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 11:17-44

Do you think Martha’s first words to Jesus conveyed disappointment, criticism, or recognition of fact? How did Martha misunderstand Jesus’ response?

Why do you think Jesus asked Martha to believe in Him before He gave her a miraculous physical reason to believe?

What does Jesus’ reaction to Mary reveal about the heart of God?

The family in this story had become very near and dear to Jesus, and these sisters were some of Jesus’ most committed followers. Even though we know that eventually God is going to make all things right, it often doesn’t help us in the moment of pain. In the moment of pain, good and right theological statements can often feel like trite cliches. Jesus knows better than any of us just how broken the world is. When He is confronted with the suffering of the world, He isn’t passive; He’s angry. In fact, Jesus feels the pain of a broken world more deeply than we do. He shared the sorrow and grief with these women and comforted them in the midst of tragedy

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 23:26-28,48-49,55, AND 24:1-10.

When you read about these women who were around for the events of the crucifixion and resurrection, what stands out to you as you contrast them with the Twelve Disciples?

Why must we make sure to not minimize the task and role of women in the faith?

When the rubber met the road, all of Jesus’ disciples fled. They were nowhere to be found while the women clung to Him. They were present in His darkest moments when Jesus’ most trusted men ran away. Women have a vital role in the faith and the women we have studied today are portraits of what it means to be devoted to Jesus in a profound and life changing way.

APPLICATION

Who are the special women in your life? How can you express appreciation and gratitude for them this week?

What are a few ways we can support women in our midst as a group?

Read Titus 2:3-5. What are the unique gifts God has given women to teach and train others in the faith?

How might you live out (or support) a woman in this calling?

PRAYER

COMMENTARY

LUKE 1:26-38

1:26-27. The announcement of Jesus' birth carried the authority of God. It came in the sixth month, a reference to the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist. The term virgin emphasized the purity associated with a young, unmarried woman. Although engaged to a man named Joseph, Mary did not yet live with Joseph. In first-century Jewish culture, engagement (or betrothal) bound them together legally as husband and wife. The wedding and consummation of the marriage, however, followed at a later time. Luke identified Mary's husband, Joseph, as a member of the house of David. The Jews knew from the Scriptures that the future Messiah would be a descendant of the great King David. This fact supported the identification of Jesus as King. The Child to be born, then, would be identified with the lineage through which the Messiah had been promised (see Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5).

1:28-30. Mary was favored because the Lord set His undeserved grace upon her, not because she had earned good standing. Understandably, she was deeply troubled (Gk diatarasso; "confused, perplexed") by Gabriel's visit and greeting, wondering how she had come to receive such an honor. Gabriel's admonishment that Mary not be afraid was the same thing he said to Zechariah (v. 13).

1:31-33. Mary's conception would be miraculous because she was still a virgin (v. 34). The name Jesus is equivalent to the Hebrew Yeshua (Joshua), meaning, "the Lord is salvation." In Genesis 14:18, God is referred to as "God Most High." Humanly speaking, Jesus' lineage would be traced legitimately through the royal family of David because Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father, was a descendant of David. This made Jesus heir to David's throne according to God's eternal covenant (see 2 Sam. 7:13,16).

1:34-35. The difference between Mary's response (how can this be) and Zechariah's (v. 18) is that Mary asked her question not from unbelief but from puzzlement (v. 38). The answer to Mary's question about how she could get pregnant without being intimate with a man is that the Holy Spirit would overshadow her and cause her to conceive. Because the Holy Spirit was the agent of conception, the child (the Holy One; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb.4:15) would be the Son of God.

1:36-38. If ever Mary was tempted to doubt God's promise to her, she could recall Gabriel's words that nothing will be impossible with God, as had been shown in the lives of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 18:14). Mary's response is a classic model of humble commitment (I am the Lord's slave) and willing obedience (may it be done to me according to your word).

LUKE 7:36-8:3

vv. 36-38 - The Setting - Jesus is invited to dine with a Pharisee named Simon. During the meal, "a woman of the city, who was a sinner," enters uninvited. Her actions are striking: she weeps, wets Jesus' feet with her tears, wipes them with her hair, kisses them, and anoints them with perfume. This act is both deeply personal and socially shocking. In that culture, her presence alone would have been scandalous. Yet Luke presents her not as disruptive but as an example of genuine repentance and love.

vv. 39- Simon internally questions Jesus' prophetic insight, assuming that a true prophet would reject contact with a sinful woman. This reveals a central tension in the passage: outward religiosity versus inward humility.

vv. 40-43 - The Parable of the Two Debtors - Jesus responds with a short parable. Two people owe money—one a large debt, one a small—but both are forgiven. Jesus asks which will love the creditor more. The answer is obvious: the one forgiven more. The point is not that some sin "matters more," but that awareness of forgiveness produces greater love.

vv. 44-47 -Application to Simon and the Woman - Jesus contrasts Simon's minimal hospitality (no water for His feet, no kiss, no oil) with the woman's extravagant love. The woman's actions are not the cause of forgiveness but the result of it.

A key theological line appears in verse 47: “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much.” Her love demonstrates the reality of her forgiveness, not the other way around.

vv. 48–50 Assurance of Forgiveness - Jesus directly declares her forgiven, which astonishes the guests. He then tells her, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” This is one of Luke’s clearest statements that salvation is received through faith, not social standing or religious status.

Luke 8:1–3 — Women in Jesus’ Ministry - Jesus continues traveling “from town to town,” proclaiming the good news of the kingdom. Luke highlights that the Twelve are with Him, but also notes women who had been healed and delivered from evil spirits, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. These women “provided for them out of their means.” This is significant: Luke explicitly records women as active supporters of Jesus’ ministry. In a time when women’s roles were often overlooked, this inclusion is theologically and socially important.

JOHN 11:17-44

vv. 17–20 Jesus arrives in Bethany and finds that Lazarus has already been in the tomb for four days. This detail emphasizes the finality of death in Jewish understanding—corruption was expected to begin after this period. Martha goes out to meet Jesus, while Mary remains seated in grief. This contrast subtly reflects different responses to suffering: active engagement versus quiet mourning.

vv. 21–22 Martha expresses both faith and sorrow: “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” She believes in Jesus’ power over sickness but not yet over death. Yet she still affirms confidence: “Even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.” Her faith is real but still developing.

vv. 23–26 Jesus responds with one of the most important statements in the Gospel: “I am the resurrection and the life.” He does not merely promise resurrection at the end of time; He identifies Himself as the source of life itself. He then reframes belief: those who believe in Him will live even after death, and those who live and believe will never die eternally. This shifts the focus from timing (future resurrection) to person (Jesus Himself).

v. 27 Martha responds with a strong confession: “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God.” This is one of the clearest declarations of faith in the Gospel, paralleling Peter’s confession in the Synoptics.

vv. 28–32 Mary repeats Martha’s words: “Lord, if you had been here...” Her posture is more emotional and expressive, falling at Jesus’ feet in grief. The shared lament highlights a universal human question: Where is God in suffering?

vv. 33–35 Jesus is “deeply moved” and “greatly troubled.” The text emphasizes His emotional response.

Verse 35 stands out: “Jesus wept.” This is not detached divinity; it is God entering human sorrow. Jesus mourns death even while preparing to defeat it.

vv. 36–37 Public Reaction - Some interpret His tears as love; others question why He did not prevent Lazarus’ death. This division foreshadows the divided responses to Jesus throughout the Gospel.

vv. 38–40 The Stone and the Delay - Jesus approaches the tomb, again “deeply moved.” He commands that the stone be removed.

Martha objects, noting the decay of the body after four days. Jesus responds: “Did I not tell you that if you believed you would see the glory of God?” Faith becomes the condition for seeing divine glory.

vv. 41–42 Jesus prays aloud, not because He lacks power, but to reveal His unity with the Father. The prayer emphasizes public faith: that the crowd may believe.

vv. 43–44 Jesus calls in a loud voice: “Lazarus, come out.” Lazarus emerges still wrapped in burial cloths. Jesus then commands, “Unbind him, and let him go.” The detail matters: resurrection is real, but freedom still requires community participation.

This passage is the climactic sign in John’s Gospel before Jesus’ passion. It records the raising of Lazarus after four days in the tomb. More than a miracle story, it reveals Jesus’ identity as the resurrection and the life, and it builds directly toward the growing opposition that leads to His crucifixion.

Luke 23:26-28

v. 26 — As Jesus is led away, the soldiers seize Simon of Cyrene, a man coming in from the countryside, and force him to carry the cross behind Jesus. Key Observations: Simon is not a volunteer but is “laid hold of”—this is compulsion under Roman authority. He carries the cross “behind Jesus,” emphasizing discipleship imagery that Luke will later echo (cf. Luke 9:23).

Simon becomes an unexpected participant in redemptive history. Though initially unwilling, he is drawn into the suffering of Christ. Early Christian tradition even suggests that Simon’s family later became believers, though Luke does not state this directly. This moment foreshadows a central paradox of discipleship: following Jesus involves bearing a cross that is not naturally chosen but spiritually transformative.

v. 27 — The Mourning Crowd - A large crowd, including women, follows Jesus, lamenting and mourning for Him.

The women are specifically noted, consistent with Luke’s attention to their presence in Jesus’ ministry. The crowd’s response is emotional grief, not yet understanding of the theological meaning of the moment. Their mourning is sincere but incomplete. They see injustice and suffering, but not yet redemption. Luke often portrays compassion toward those who grieve even when they do not fully understand God’s purposes.

v. 28 — Jesus turns and speaks directly to them: “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” Jesus calls them “Daughters of Jerusalem,” a tender but prophetic address. He redirects their sorrow from Him to the coming judgment upon Jerusalem. This is not a rejection of compassion but a prophetic warning. Jesus is pointing ahead to the destruction of Jerusalem (fulfilled in AD 70), where suffering will be even greater.

The irony is profound: they weep for the innocent suffering of Jesus, yet greater judgment is coming because of the rejection of the Messiah. Jesus, in His own suffering, still warns and shepherds others.

Luke 23:48-49

This brief section describes the aftermath of Jesus’ death. Luke highlights three groups: the watching crowd, the acquaintances of Jesus, and the women who followed Him from Galilee. Their responses range from grief and repentance to silent observation.

v. 48 — The Crowd's Reaction

“And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.”

The crowd came to witness a “spectacle,” but they leave changed. “Beating their breasts” is a cultural expression of deep grief, shame, or repentance. Luke emphasizes “all the crowds,” suggesting a widespread emotional impact. This is more than curiosity—it becomes conviction. While many may not yet fully understand who Jesus is, the signs surrounding His death (darkness, temple curtain torn, Jesus’ words, and manner of dying) produce a moral and spiritual awakening. Unlike earlier mocking crowds, this group is now silent and sorrowful. The crucifixion confronts them with the weight of what has occurred.

Luke presents the cross as something that does not leave observers neutral. Even those not yet believing are shaken into reflection and remorse.

v. 49 — The Observers from a Distance- “And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.” “Acquaintances” likely refers to disciples and followers who are not part of the inner circle at the scene. The women are specifically mentioned again, continuing Luke’s emphasis on their faithful presence. They “stood at a distance,” indicating fear, grief, or helplessness.

Unlike the earlier crowd, this group is emotionally attached to Jesus but still overwhelmed and unsure. Their distance may reflect: Fear of Roman or Jewish authorities, Shock and confusion, The inability to process what has just happened. Yet importantly, they remain present. They do not abandon the scene entirely.

Luke portrays early discipleship as fragile but enduring. Faith is not absent, but it is strained. Even in confusion, presence matters.

Luke 24:1-10

1–3 — The Empty Tomb- The women who had followed Jesus from Galilee come early on the first day of the week, bringing spices they had prepared. Their intent is not expectation of resurrection but devotion to a dead teacher.

The women arrive at dawn, showing urgency and love. They expect to complete burial customs, not witness a miracle. The stone is already rolled away when they arrive. The body of Jesus is not found.

Luke emphasizes the shock of absence. The empty tomb is not immediately interpreted as resurrection—it is initially experienced as confusion and loss. Resurrection faith begins not with certainty, but with an empty space that demands explanation.

vv. 4–7 — The Angelic Message - Two men in dazzling clothes (angels) appear and ask: “Why do you seek the living among the dead?” They remind the women of Jesus’ own words predicting His death and resurrection. The angels redirect interpretation: the issue is not absence of body but misunderstanding of life. Jesus had previously foretold these events in Galilee. The resurrection is framed as fulfillment, not surprise to God.

The angels do not merely announce news—they correct perception. The problem is not the tomb; it is expectation. The resurrection is presented as divine necessity: “He must be delivered... crucified... and rise.”

vv. 8–10 — Remembering and Reporting - The women “remember” Jesus’ words, marking a turning point from confusion to understanding. Memory becomes the bridge between prophecy and fulfillment. The women respond with fear and joy. They become the first messengers of the resurrection to the apostles. The named women (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and others) emphasize historical witness.

Luke carefully highlights that the first witnesses to resurrection are women—significant in a cultural context where their testimony was often undervalued. Yet God entrusts them with this foundational announcement. The resurrection message begins with remembrance, moves to belief, and leads to testimony.