

Women  
Who Followed  
Jesus

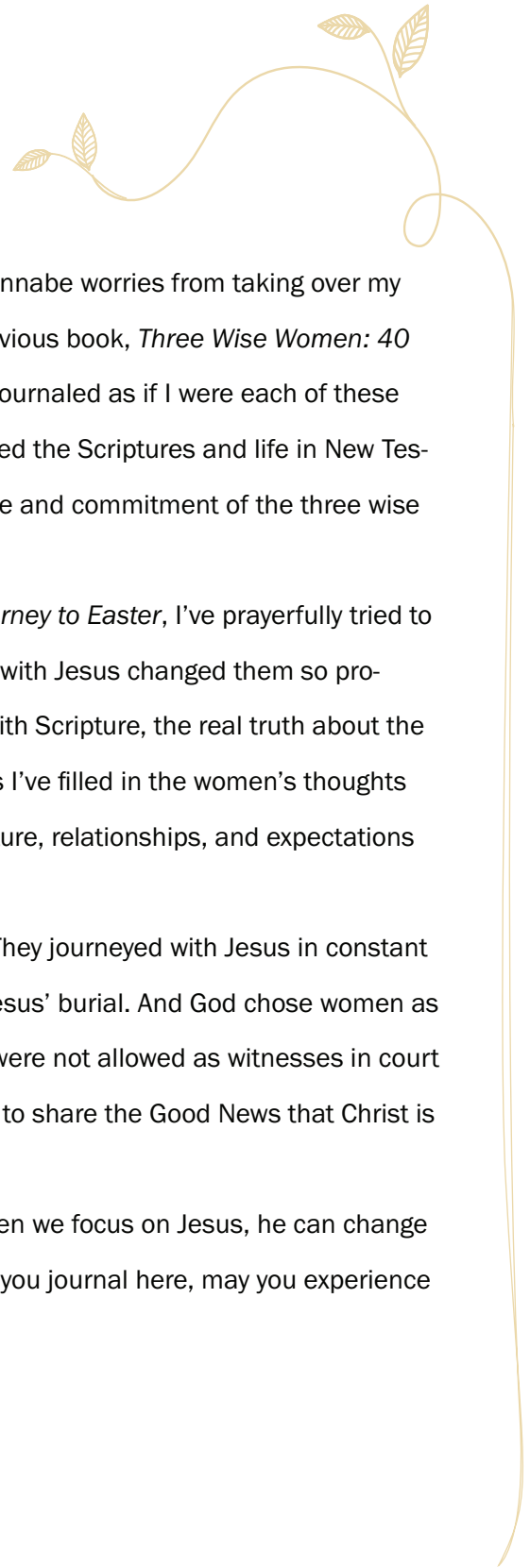
*A 10-Day  
Interactive Journal*

DANDI DALEY MACKALL





# A Note From the Author



I love to journal. Writing helps keep the swirling thoughts and wannabe worries from taking over my mind. Setting words on a journal page helps me focus. In my previous book, *Three Wise Women: 40 Devotions Celebrating Advent with Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna*, I journaled as if I were each of these three amazing women anticipating the birth of the Savior. I studied the Scriptures and life in New Testament times and came out with a deeper admiration for the love and commitment of the three wise women.

In *Women Who Followed Jesus: 40 Devotions on the Journey to Easter*, I've prayerfully tried to get inside the minds of many diverse women whose encounters with Jesus changed them so profoundly they risked their lives to follow him. Each "Day" begins with Scripture, the real truth about the lives of Jesus and the women included in this new devotional. As I've filled in the women's thoughts and the details of their lives, I've relied on biblical studies of culture, relationships, and expectations prevalent in the Middle East in the first century.

God used these ordinary women in extraordinary ways. They journeyed with Jesus in constant danger, stayed at the cross through the crucifixion, followed to Jesus' burial. And God chose women as the first eyewitnesses to the Resurrection, even though women were not allowed as witnesses in court because they were deemed unreliable. Yet women were the first to share the Good News that Christ is risen.

I believe you'll see yourself in each changed woman. When we focus on Jesus, he can change us and shower us with forgiveness, grace, and unfailing love. As you journal here, may you experience the love of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

**He is risen!**

*Dandi*

# Following

# DAY 1

*“I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.*

*—John 10:14–15*

*“I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So I sacrifice my life for the sheep.”*

*—John 10:14–15 (NLT)*

*“My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.”*

*—John 10:27–28*

***In what ways is Jesus a shepherd to you? Has he ever led you through “the valley of death,” as in Psalm 23?***

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***How do you feel about your role as a sheep? As prey animals, sheep have only one means of survival on their own: to run away. How do you tend to react when you’re frightened or don’t know what to do next?***

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***Jesus promises that people who listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd and follow him will receive eternal life and be protected by the One more powerful than anyone else. Do you think you need protection?***

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Jesus is the Master of metaphors, helping listeners understand through verbal images: “I am the Good Shepherd; I am the Bread of Life; I am the Living Water; I am the Light of the World; I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; I am the True Vine; I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

***Journal a thank-you letter to Jesus, thanking him for each promised “I am.” Detail what each promise means to you, and reflect on these promises through the Easter season (space to journal on next page).***





Mary Magdalene,  
Joanna, Susanna  
and others

# Change & Challenges

DAY  
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“Soon afterward he went on through one town and village after another, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered to them out of their own resources.” —Luke 8:1–3

Three of Jesus’ women followers are named in this passage: Joanna, married to Herod’s business manager; Mary Magdalene, whose life must have been chaotic before Jesus cast out seven demons; and Susanna, who is never mentioned again. They all contributed from their own resources to support Jesus and the disciples. As they traveled with other women, plus men disciples, the women must have struggled with the ordinary troubles we all experience.

***Journal as if you’re Mary Magdalene, or Joanna, or Susanna on a typical, trying day. Are you part of any group where people don’t always get along? Why is that?***

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***Many women believed in Jesus but didn’t choose to follow him from place to place. How do you think you would have responded if you met Jesus or heard him speak? Would you have left everything and followed him?***

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***People were quick to criticize the women traveling with Jesus—something outrageous and not done! Do you, as a Christian, ever judge a person or group, or gossip about someone you dislike? How can we encourage one another, even when we disagree?***

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“Then Jesus, in the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding region. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read.” —Luke 4:14–16  
But when Jesus claimed that Isaiah’s promise of the coming Messiah was fulfilled in him, people grew furious. “They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.” —Luke 4:29–30

**Imagine Mary returning to Nazareth after having been shunned there by people who did not believe Jesus was God’s Son. Journal as if you’re Mary coming home in victory, with her hometown cheering the Healer and Miracle Worker, Mary’s Son. Then journal as Mary, watching those same people drag Jesus to throw him off the cliff.**

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**Have you ever been rejected? It may have been a temporary slight—not being asked to sit at the table where you wanted to sit, or not being invited to the luncheon everybody’s talking about. Or the rejection may have been severe and still hurts. Journal about it to Jesus.**

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**Have you ever rejected another person? Be honest and specific, and write everything you remember about when you rejected another person or a group of people who were not like you.**

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**This Easter season, consider how you might include people you’ve been passing by. Pray about a person—or people—you could ask to join in your Easter celebrations. List possibilities.**

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“He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.” — Isaiah 53:3 (NIV)



# SALOME

# Pride

# DAY 4

*“Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to him with her sons, and kneeling before him, she asked a favor of him. And he said to her, ‘What do you want?’ She said to him, ‘Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.’ But Jesus answered, ‘You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?’ They said to him, ‘We are able.’”*  
 —Matthew 20:20–22

**Salome, wife of Zebedee, mother of James and John, took pride in her sons. How close they were to Jesus, who was setting up his Kingdom! She only wanted the best for them when she asked her favor. Journal as if you are this proud mother seeking special favors from Jesus. What favors would you ask today? Dig deep into Salome’s possible motives . . . and yours.**

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**In your own words, define what you think *pride* means. Is having pride in yourself or a loved one always wrong?**

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**Have you ever let pride take you somewhere you later regretted? Proverbs 18:18 says: *Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.* If you’ve recognized pride in yourself that led to a fall, how did you handle it?**

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When Jesus taught that in his Kingdom, the first would be last and the last first, Salome must have been deeply embarrassed at her request to elevate her sons in the coming Kingdom. She may have come to regret her prideful influence on her boys when they quickly vowed that they were able to suffer as Jesus would. Yet she overcame that embarrassment and returned to help Jesus and the group of disciples. Matthew says she traveled from Galilee to care for Jesus, and she stayed at the cross. She didn’t allow her pride to keep her from serving Christ.

***This Easter, is there anything that keeps you from closeness with Christ? Journal a thank-you note for God’s forgiveness and unfailing love (space to journal on next page).***

*“And you, do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them.”*  
 —Jeremiah 45:5a







# MARY of Bethany

# Devotion

DAY  
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Jesus often visited the home of Mary and Martha and their brother, Lazarus, in Bethany. At one dinner for Jesus and his followers, Martha complained that she was doing all the work while Mary sat listening to Jesus. Although the guests agreed with Martha, Jesus surprised them by saying: “*Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, but few things are needed—indeed only one. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.*” —See Luke 10:38–42

**Journal a response as if you're Martha. Then do the same for Mary. Which woman sounds more like you?**

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Toward the end of Christ's journey on Earth, Jesus and his followers came for another dinner in Bethany. Mary took the most precious thing she owned, a jar of very costly perfume, possibly given to her for a dowry, and anointed Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair. Enraged, other disciples shouted that she should have put the money to better use. **Which of your possessions, your security, would be hardest for you to give away? What would make it so hard?**

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Mary of Bethany seems to have experienced a deep relationship with Jesus. Again he stood up for her and praised her devotion. Mary understood that Jesus' death was imminent. **Journal about your relationship with Jesus. How would your friendship with Jesus change if you were as devoted as Mary of Bethany? What can you do draw closer to Jesus this Easter?**

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Mary chose to please Jesus rather than other people. Answer the questions the Apostle Paul raises in Galatians 1:10: “*Am I now seeking human approval or God's approval? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ.*” **Journal honestly. Are you seeking the approval of God or people?**

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# JOANNA

wife of Chuza

# Courage

# DAY 6

“Soon afterward he went on through one town and village after another, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and **Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza**, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered to them out of their own resources.”

—Luke 8:1–3, emphasis added

“And returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene, **Joanna**, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.” —Luke 24:9–11, emphasis added

Joanna’s husband, Chuza, handled finances and domestic affairs for Herod, who wanted to kill Jesus. They likely lived in Herod’s palace in Tiberius and his palace-fortress in Jerusalem. Jesus healed Joanna, and she followed him, giving her own possessions to support Jesus and his followers, and she traveled with them. We don’t know many details of her life, but we see her courage.

**Do you think of yourself as courageous? Why or why not? Journal specific examples.**

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We don’t know the illness or infirmity Joanna suffered from, but Jesus healed her. Have you ever been healed? Have you asked God to heal you, but He hasn’t? Journal to Jesus honestly about disappointment, hope, and gratitude.

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It took courage for Joanna to identify herself with the other women who followed Jesus. And she needed even more courage to go to the tomb with Mary Magdalene and others to tend to Jesus’ body. Journal as if you’re Joanna on your way to the tomb. What are your fears? Why is this worth the risk?

**How can you be more courageous and giving, like Joanna, during this Easter season?**

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Joanna and the other women were sad, upset, and angry when they found the tomb empty. But when a heavenly being explained that “Jesus is risen,” just as he promised, they rejoiced and ran to tell the disciples, who were hiding behind closed doors. Not only were the women not believed, but they were accused of telling idle tales.

**Have you ever told the truth, but were met with skepticism and unbelief? Journal how that felt and how the faithful women followers may have felt.**

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*“But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.” —Isaiah 53:5*

Jesus’ mother, Mary of Nazareth, stood beneath the cross and watched the torture and pain of the Son of God, **her** son too. Crucifixion was the worst form of execution, too horrible to be carried out on Romans. Mary stayed as the crowd jeered, calling Jesus names, challenging him to come down from the cross, to prove He was who He said He was.

**Journal as if you are Mary at the cross. What are her memories of Jesus’ childhood, of the promise from Gabriel that she would have a son? And now . . . ?**

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Even in his tortured condition, Jesus provided for his mother. *“When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.” —John 19:26–27*

**Journal about the people in your life who have helped provide for your needs. How have you helped provide for others? How can you help others this Easter season?**

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The Apostle Paul gave this promise: *“And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” —Philippians 4:19*

**How has God provided for you? What specific needs has he satisfied? Are you waiting on his help in any part of your life now? Journal a thank-you to God for his answers in the past, and for those he will provide in the future.**

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# Women at the Cross

## DAY 8

Surrounded by threats, hatred, and danger, women followed Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem. Many women followed all the way to the crucifixion of their Good Shepherd. They could have heard some or all of the seven “Last Words” of Jesus on the cross.

*Journal after each utterance below, talking to Christ with compassion and gratitude. In **Women Who Followed Jesus:40 Devotions on the Journey to Easter**, each of these quotations are handled in depth. For now, try to discover what the words of Jesus mean to you. What do they show us about God? About ourselves?*

*“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” —Luke 23:34*

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*“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.” —Luke 23:43*

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*“When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ ”  
—John 19:26–27*

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[Day 9 continues with the rest of Christ’s words on the cross.]



# Jesus' Last Words

## DAY 9

At nine in the morning, Jesus was nailed to the cross, crucified between two criminals who hurled abuse at him until one man believed. All morning, the crowd cheered and jeered. At noon, darkness covered the whole land until 3 o'clock, when Jesus shouted out his next word. Continue journaling and imagine you were there with the women who followed Jesus.

*"Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" — Mark 15:34*

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*"After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), 'I am thirsty.'" —John 19:28*

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*"It is finished." —John 19:30*

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*"Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." —Luke 23:46a*

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***"Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." —Luke 23:46b (NLT)***

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***If Jesus had not died on the cross, what difference would it have made to you, day-to-day and eternally?***

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# MARY MAGDALENE

# He Is Risen!

DAY  
10

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.” —John 20:1

**Journal as if you are Mary Magdalene finding the tomb empty. Later you see Jesus in the Garden; but mistaking him for the gardener, you ask him where they’ve moved Jesus’ body.**

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“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ (which means Teacher).” —John 20:16

**Journal about your own recognition of Jesus as God’s Son. What made you believe?**

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As a woman, Mary Magdalene was considered too unreliable to be a court witness. She’d had seven demons inhabiting her. Jesus knew most people wouldn’t believe a word she said. Yet he gave her the honor of being first to see the resurrected Jesus and first to carry the Good News.

**Journal joy! Share in the joy of women who follow Jesus, then and now. Are there reasons people might not accept you as a witness for the Good News? Rejoice that Jesus offers salvation, hope, and the joy of his presence.**

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**If Jesus has not risen from death on Easter morning, how would your life be different? Share your answer with at least one person during Easter season.**

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## Hallelujah! Dandi

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