

Behold

THE EASTER OCTAVE

from the
Live Today Well Collective

Be.

Be Still.

Behold Him.

INTRODUCTION

Dearest Friends,

“Behold, I make all things new.” [Revelations 21:5]

As we set out to create this project for the Easter Octave, we knew a couple of things. We both longed to journey deeper into the heart of the Resurrection and wanted to carry that joy with us into our day to day lives. Above all else, however, we felt this aching need to just sit with the Gospels and follow along Christ’s path in the moments and days immediately following the Resurrection.

Throughout the Easter Octave, we find the word “Behold” in many of the readings. In two short days, we move from beholding “the place where they laid him” (Mk 16:6) to beholding the risen Jesus meeting Mary Magdalene and the other Mary for the first time (Mt 28:9). As we began to reflect on these readings, we realized that in order to truly behold Jesus, we have to be still.

Our culture is noisy and chaotic. We’re bombarded by all sides with demands for our time, our attention, our money, and our hearts. In a nutshell, we’re busy.

Ironically, what our souls crave the most is quiet. Peace. Stillness. Carving out moments of silence can seem like an impossible task in this day and age. Yet, in the quiet of our hearts, the Lord whispers to our souls and draws us deeper into the mystery of His love.

Each aspect of Behold was crafted with this goal in mind. Using the Ignatian spiritual practice of imaginative prayer, we rewrote each of the daily Gospel readings. While the stories and direct quotes remain the same, lots of additional sensory details have been added to help bring the Gospel stories to life. You can learn more about imaginative prayer on the page titled “About Behold.”

The artwork was created with the intention of helping us lean into the beauty and joy of the resurrection! More information on the inspiration behind and purpose of the artwork can be found on the page titled “About the Artwork.”

Each day of Behold also includes a small “Call and Response card” that can be easily printed out to hang up in your own home or to use during your daily prayer. On the back of the cards, you’ll see an action step or question to meditate on for the day. Think of these cards as encouraging and beautiful Easter decorations to carry you and your family on to Pentecost! You’ll find the cards ready for printing on the final four pages of this PDF.

This humble booklet is the product of so much reflection, discussion, late nights, and, above all, prayer. Every inch of Behold (from the content, to the artwork, and even the layout) has been lifted up to God in prayer.

As we enter into this beautiful and rich liturgical season, we are so thrilled to share this journey with you! Our hope, dear friends, is that this booklet will enable us all to slow down and rest in the joy and peace of the Risen Lord. Let us Behold Him.

With all of our love,

 Kara and Mary

Carving out moments of
silence can seem like an
impossible task in this day and
age. Yet, in the quiet of our
hearts, the Lord whispers to
our souls and draws us deeper
into the mystery of His love.

ABOUT BEHOLD

WHAT IS IMAGINATIVE PRAYER?

Ignatian Imaginative Prayer is a form of contemplation in which the individual reflects on a specific passage of Scripture using her imagination. In this form of prayer, the individual uses her five senses to place herself fully within the story by engaging in the sights, smells, noises, and movements with vivid details in the quiet of her mind.

Ideally, as believers, we do not merely just read or remember the stories of Jesus' life. Instead, we should strive to dig deeper into each story so that God can communicate with us in a meaningful and evocative way. Ultimately, the purpose of imaginative prayer is to help us connect with Jesus on a more intimate and personal level.

HOW DO I USE BEHOLD?

If imaginative prayer sounds confusing or intimidating, don't worry. We tried to make this process simple for you! We already rewrote each day's reading using imaginative prayer and included step by step instructions as well. However, here are a few suggestions to keep in mind:

CLEAR YOUR MIND

At the beginning of each day's reflection, pause. Clear your mind of any worries or anxieties. If your to-do list keeps swirling around your mind, write it down on a piece of paper and then set it to the side. Mentally place yourself in the presence of Jesus.

REFLECT

Read through the Gospel once just to get a sense of the story. Then, read through the story again very slowly, imagining each sensory description in detail. Mentally place yourself into the story and add additional details. Sometimes it helps to imagine yourself as one of the characters in the story or as an onlooker. No matter what perspective you choose to pray from, just be present in the story.

RESPOND

Meditate on the Gospel and ask our Lord what He wishes to reveal to you through this specific passage. Each day also has a corresponding Call and Response card with a question that you can meditate on, as well as a response to help you get started.

ONE FINAL, IMPORTANT NOTE

This form of prayer is not about doing. You don't have to journal or talk, though you certainly can do so if you find those methods of prayer helpful. Ultimately, this type of prayer is all about being present to and with Christ.

As you start to pray through this booklet, this method of prayer may seem totally foreign to you. You may find yourself becoming uncomfortable or emotional. That's okay; it's normal to feel uncomfortable! Scripture is meant to challenge us and draw us into deeper reflection and meditation. Acknowledge and lean into that feeling, but then concentrate on the Gospel. Breathe in the words of Scripture and visualize the story in your mind and heart.

In these beautiful readings, God invites us to behold and BE with Him in these first days after the Resurrection. We hear Jesus' directions and see the response of the disciples. What will your response to His loving invitation be?

ABOUT THE ART

Cover art: Fluid acrylic on canvas, 9"x12"

Art has the power to transcend.

The art of Behold isn't supposed to be the center of attention. Rather, the painting strives to empower the viewer to orient her heart toward the wonder, hope, and joy of the Resurrection. It is our belief that we can come to know Jesus more fully through the humble and beautiful encouragement of art.

Layer by layer of fluid acrylic was poured prayerfully and intentionally, and each day of the Octave shows the progression toward the completed painting. Day by day, our hearts are bathed in another layer of Jesus' unabiding love for us. This ongoing revival of our hearts as we hear the Lord's call and respond to Him is the true art of Behold.

Once poured onto the canvas, fluid acrylic is pushed and pulled with brushes or other tools and then left to dry. The paint drips, swirls, bleeds, and blends. The way that each layer dries is often a surprise to the artist. In the same way, we hope to encourage you be open to the joyful surprises God has in store for you this Easter season.

As you use this reflection booklet, let your eyes wander through the artwork, noticing the beautiful drips and splotches that some might call mistakes...look between the multiple layers of paint...stay there a while. What does it make you feel? The fullness of life is found in the Resurrection. It is only when we step back to wonder at the entirety of this beautiful truth of our faith, just as your eyes might look in wonder upon this art, that we begin to experience the glory that is Truth, Beauty, and Goodness.

May your heart experience joy and wonder during the Octave.

May you come to know Jesus more deeply.

May you always know that YOU are the truest and most beautiful art our Creator could ever make.



[DAY ONE] BEHOLD

THE FIRST DAY OF EASTER

*Pause and clear your mind.
Center yourself in God's
presence.*

*Read through the Gospel
passage once. Then
reread the Gospel again
more slowly and choose a
character to follow through
the story.*

*Will you approach this
Gospel from Mary
Magdalene's perspective
or the angel's perspective?
Perhaps you are a silent
observer watching the story
unfold while sitting under a
nearby tree.*

*Regardless of your stance,
know that this moment is
full of grace.*

Behold Him.

MARK 16:1-7

As the darkness of night faded and the Sabbath day drew to a close, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome met on an empty street corner in Jerusalem. With a nod of greeting to one another, the women tucked small bottles of spices into their rough, wicker baskets and began to journey down the dirt path, their feet kicking up a cloud of dust behind them.

Intent on their purpose, the women did not speak much as they made their way to the tomb where Jesus' body lay. The sight of their friends' tear-stained faces and the fragrant aromas rising from their baskets were enough to remind each woman of what had transpired less than two days before. Quietly, they proceeded down the rough, bumpy road past row after row of olive trees as the crisp morning air washed over them.

The sun's rays were just beginning to peek above the horizon, painting the sky in a swath of vibrant colors, when the garden where the tomb lay came into view. Worriedly, they turned to one another and asked somberly, "Who will roll back the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?"

As they scanned the garden in search of several men to help them move the stone, they gasped in astonishment. Though the tomb remained in place, the massive, towering stone, which had blocked the entrance, was cast to the side. A wave of emotion washed over the women, filling them with sensations of amazement, terror, and fury. *Had Jesus' body been stolen? Had Pilate*

ordered his body moved? How could this stone, which required the strenuous effort of several men to move, have been displaced without any clearly visible explanation?

Mary Magdalene slowly approached the tomb. Resting her trembling fingertips upon the cool, rough stone of the doorway, she took a shaky breath and then stepped through the narrow entrance. Keeping one hand along the wall as a guide, the other women followed her into the depths of the tomb.

Filled with awe and fear at the sight in front of her, Mary Magdalene stepped backwards unconsciously, pinning the other women against the wall. The women gazed upon a young man sitting on the right side of the tomb where Jesus' body had lain. Bright light streamed from his body, illuminating the inside of the tomb. Though clothed in a pristine white robe, he appeared to be translucent to the women. With shining eyes, he raised one hand and reached out towards them.

He said, "Do not be amazed! You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. But go and tell the disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.'"

Behold



[DAY TWO]
DO NOT BE AFRAID

THE SECOND DAY OF EASTER

Pause and clear your mind.

Center yourself in God's presence.

Read the Gospel passage once. Then reread the Gospel again more slowly and choose a character to follow through the story.

Will you approach this Gospel from Mary Magdalene's perspective or Jesus' perspective? Perhaps you are a silent observer watching the story unfold from the road.

Whoever you choose, enter into the story with a humble, open heart.

Be still.

MATTHEW 28:8 - 15

Stunned, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary turned toward one another. As they stared at each other, shock and awe registered on their faces. Each woman tried to allow the angel's words to penetrate her mind and heart. "How can this be?" the women wondered. Remembering their duty, they grasped hold of each other's hands, quickly spun on their heels, and left the tomb.

Spurred to action by the angel's words, the two women began to jog and then sprint through the garden. As they ran along the path, they stumbled over tree roots and jagged rocks. Ignoring the brambles sweeping at their feet and pulling at their clothes, they darted past olive trees as fast as their feet could carry them. The wind whipped through their hair as they rounded the corner of the path near the main road.

Winded, the two women paused for a brief moment to catch their breath. Panting hard, they looked up to see a man approaching them. From a distance, it appeared as if he was floating just above the ground. As he moved closer to them, the women recognized him as their beloved friend. His deep, thoughtful eyes gazed upon them lovingly. Standing before them with folded hands, he patiently waited for them to process his appearance. Even from a short distance, the two women could see the gaping wounds in his side, feet, and hands.

Hesitantly, they approached Jesus. Mary Magdalene lifted her hand slowly and reached out to

caress Jesus' face. Then both women knelt silently before him. Slowly and delicately, the women placed their hands on his wounded feet and kissed them tenderly with trembling lips. Bathing his feet with their tears, the two women rejoiced in the presence of their friend and Savior.

Reaching down, Jesus gently lifted them up. Wrapping them in his comforting embrace, Jesus spoke reassuringly, "Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me." Nodding and wiping tears from their smiling eyes, the two women stood and gazed upon our Lord with widening eyes. Joy filled their hearts to the brim as they left Jesus' presence to spread the good news.

While they were going, some of the guards from the garden awoke and realized what had happened. Immediately, they donned their helmets and proceeded to the city where they grimly marched through the busy marketplace, pushing past merchants and farmers. Appearing before the chief priests, the soldiers bowed and told them all that had happened. Furious and confused, the chief priests sent servants to summon the elders and consult with them.

Upon their arrival, the elders paced in circles around the guards, ordering the armor-clad men to recount their story in excruciating detail. Then chief priests and elders debated amongst themselves; finally, pooling their money, they presented a large bag of coins to the soldiers, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole him while we were asleep.' And if this gets to the ears of the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble."

Relieved, the guards snatched the sack of money, nodded, and did as they were instructed. This story has been passed on through the ages, from generation to generation.



do
not
be
afraid



[DAY THREE]
WHOM ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?

THE THIRD DAY OF EASTER

Clear your mind and center yourself in God's presence.

Read through the Gospel passage once. Then reread the Gospel again more slowly.

Imagine you are seeing the Lord for the first time after his death. From which perspective will you approach this story?

Perhaps you are a silent observer, or Mary Magdalene, or Jesus.

Whoever you choose, enter into the story with a humble, open heart.

Be still.

JOHN 20:11-18

Overcome with emotion, Mary Magdalene clutched her thick, woolen dress close to her chest and wept. As the tears poured down her face, she beat her fist against the stone until it ached. Bending forward at the waist, she stumbled into the entrance of the tomb. There, her eyes fell upon two beings draped in white cloth. They were seated calmly on the bench where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and one at the feet, and were enveloped by a bright light. Observing her distress, the angels called out to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"

Angrily, she cried, "They have taken my Lord, and I don't know where they laid him." Backing away from the angels, Mary leaned against the rocky wall of the outside of the tomb. Grief swallowed her whole being, and she hardly registered the scene she had just observed within the tomb. As

the tears stung her eyes and fell in large, glossy drops to her cheeks, Mary curled up in a ball on the ground amidst the grass and the dirt.

In between the sound of her own sobs, Mary heard footsteps. Glancing up, she saw a tall man standing before her. In a compassionate voice, he asked her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Thinking him to be a gardener, Mary drew a deep breath and wailed, "Sir, if you carried him away, tell me where you laid him, and I will take him." Then she bowed her head and lay it on her knees, rocking slowly back and forth.

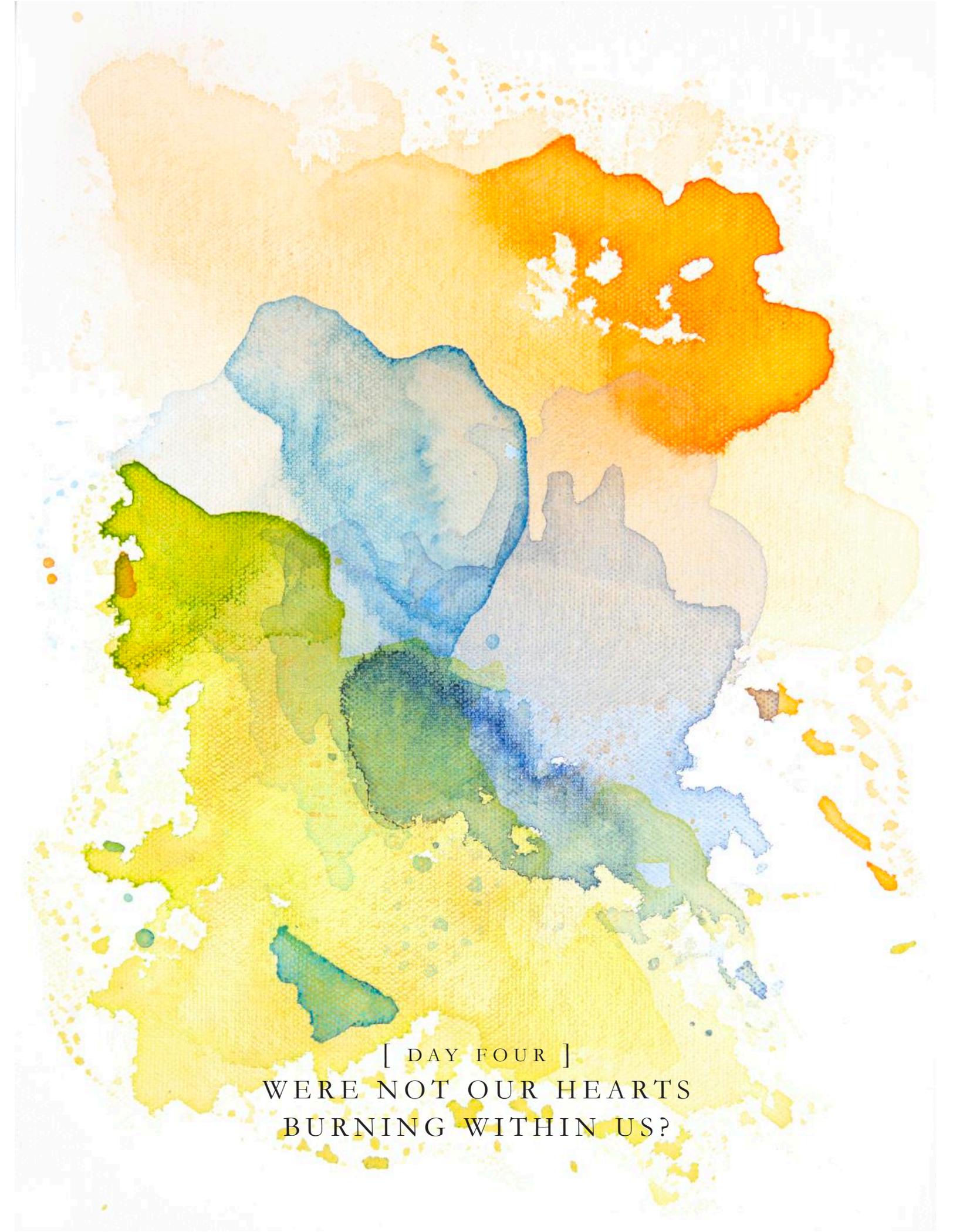


Whom
are
you
looking
for?

Kneeling beside her, the man reached toward her and rested his fingers gently on her arm. He said to her, “Mary!” Upon sensing his touch, Mary lifted her head and gazed upon the man with amazement. Recognizing him to be Jesus, she said to him in Hebrew, “Rabbouni” (which means Teacher). Immediately, her tears of mourning turned to tears of joy as she fell into his arms and embraced him.

After stroking her glossy, black hair for a moment, Jesus held Mary at arm’s length. With a firm but gentle voice, he said to her, “Stop holding on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am going to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

Putting aside her desire to sit and talk with him, Mary kissed Jesus’ cheek one last time and left swiftly. She sprinted down the road to the city, her feet as light as bird’s wings. After banging on the wooden door, she entered the house where the disciples were gathered. Short of breath, she paused momentarily. With flushed cheeks, Mary announced excitedly, “I have seen the Lord,” and then shared the joyful news with her friends.

An abstract watercolor painting on a white background. The composition features several large, overlapping washes of color. At the top, there's a broad wash of light orange and yellow. Below this, a large, irregular shape is filled with a mix of blue and green, with some darker, more saturated areas. To the right, there's a wash of light blue and grey. The bottom half of the image is dominated by a large, bright yellow wash, with some smaller, darker green and blue spots scattered throughout. The overall effect is one of soft, blended colors with some darker, more defined areas, suggesting a sense of movement and depth.

[DAY FOUR]
WERE NOT OUR HEARTS
BURNING WITHIN US?

THE FOURTH DAY OF EASTER

LUKE 24:13-35

Clear your mind and center yourself in God's presence.

Read through the Gospel passage once. Then reread the Gospel again more slowly.

From which perspective will you approach this story? Perhaps you are a silent observer, Cleopas, the other disciple, or Jesus.

Whomever you choose, enter into the story with a humble, open heart.

Be still.

That same day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were traveling to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus. With the sun beating down upon their backs, the two men walked steadily and methodically down the road, chatting with each other to help pass the time. Together, they debated and discussed everything that had happened over the past few days, from their failure to remain awake in the garden, to Jesus' trial and death, and now, the disappearance of his body. As they tried to make sense of it all, they shared their feelings of guilt, despair, and amazement with each other.

Along the way, another traveler joined them. He stooped under the weight of the heavy cloth pack which he carried upon his back. With a long beard and dark eyes, the man seemed focused. Raising a hand in greeting, he fell into step beside them. Nodding at the man, the two disciples continued murmuring

to one another. They were so consumed in their conversation that their eyes and hearts did not recognize the man as Jesus.

Eventually, the man interrupted them. "What are you discussing as you walk along?" The two disciples paused and gazed down, tears springing to their eyes. One of the disciples dejectedly kicked a pebble with his foot while the other one, named Cleopas, replied in a weary voice, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?"

He asked them, “What sort of things?” Clenching and unclenching his sweaty palms, Cleopas sighed heavily and responded, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him.”

Here, Cleopas paused, choked up with emotion. After a moment, he shook his head and brushed the tears from his eyes. “But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place,” he continued.

With bewilderment in his voice, he added slowly, “Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his Body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive.”

Abruptly shaking the hope from his voice, he continued, “Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see.” As if resigning himself to this notion, Cleopas shifted his pack on his shoulder and began to walk faster.

“Oh, how foolish you are!” the stranger cried out. He picked up the pace as well and exclaimed, “How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

With wonder, Cleopas and his fellow disciple listened to the traveler recount much of Scripture. Beginning with Moses and the prophets, the man explained and interpreted to them all of the prophecies and figures that preceded and referred to Christ. As they listened to him talk, zeal filled the men and they walked more quickly and purposefully, emboldened with the desire to share all that they had learned.

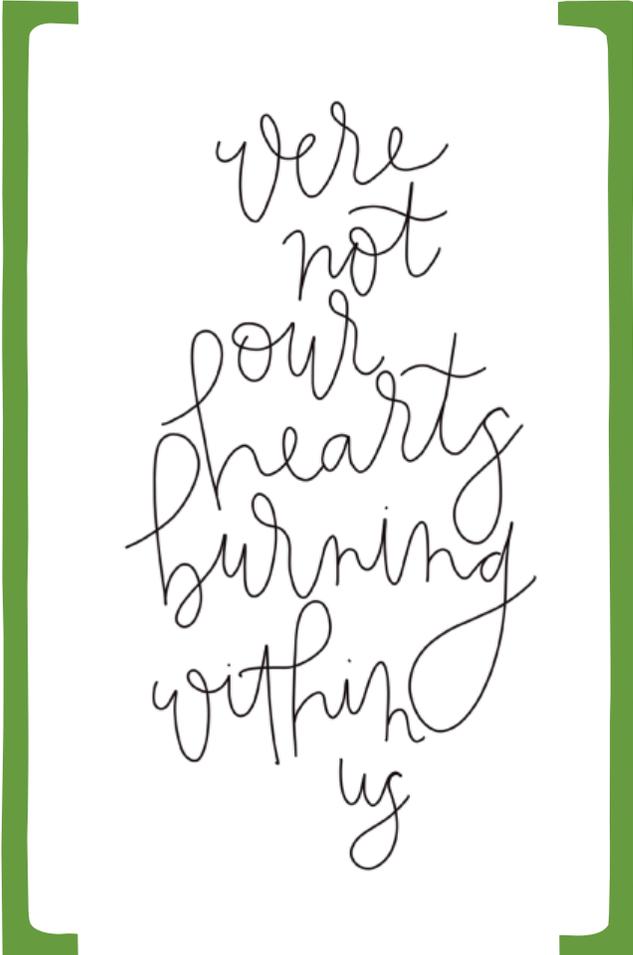
Upon arriving at the disciples’ destination, their new friend gave the impression that he was going on farther. As he prepared to continue on his way, the two men gestured to the nearest house and urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is over.”

Convinced, he stepped inside the house with them, brushing dust off his feet. And it happened that while they were seated at the long, wooden table, he took hold of a firm, crusty piece of bread, said a blessing over it, broke it in two, and gave it to them. Their eyes widened and their breathing sped up. Scales fell from their eyes and they recognized him as the Lord. Reaching toward him with the intent of embracing him, both disciples fell backwards as he disappeared from their sight. Their chairs clattered to the floor, dumping the disciples unceremoniously on the ground. The two men gazed at each other in wonder.

Filled with trepidation and joy, the two disciples slowly stood up, brushed the dirt off their clothes, and said to one another “Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?”

So they set out at once, leaving their packs behind them in their haste to return to Jerusalem. Speeding through the night with only the light of the stars to guide them, the disciples did not allow their pace to slow. When they arrived, they found the Eleven and those with them gathered together, praying.

Throwing open the door, immediately, the two disciples shouted with one voice, “The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!” Then they bolted the door behind them and, with hearts ablaze, recounted to their friends what had taken place on the long road to Emmaus and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.



were
not
our
hearts
burning
within
us



[DAY FIVE]
PEACE BE WITH YOU

THE FIFTH DAY OF EASTER

LUKE 24:35 - 48

Clear your mind and center yourself in God's presence.

Read through the Gospel passage once. Then reread the Gospel again more slowly.

From which perspective will you approach this story? Perhaps you are a silent observer, one of the other disciples, or Jesus.

Whomever you choose, enter into the story with a humble, open heart.

Be still.

Then they bolted the door behind them and, with hearts ablaze, recounted to their friends what had taken place on the long road to Emmaus and how Jesus was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. Babbling on enthusiastically, the disciples shared every detail they could recall of their encounter with the Lord. As they talked, their voices grew progressively louder with excitement and their hands gesticulated wildly.

While they were speaking, a brilliant, golden light appeared in their midst. Streaming forth, the light illuminated every corner of the room and blinded all those who were present. The two disciples began to stammer and then fell silent, while others in the room cried out in terror. Some disciples fumbled across the stone floor, trying to find their way to the door. Still others climbed over one another in search of the windows. Several disciples stood completely still, as if they were made of stone.

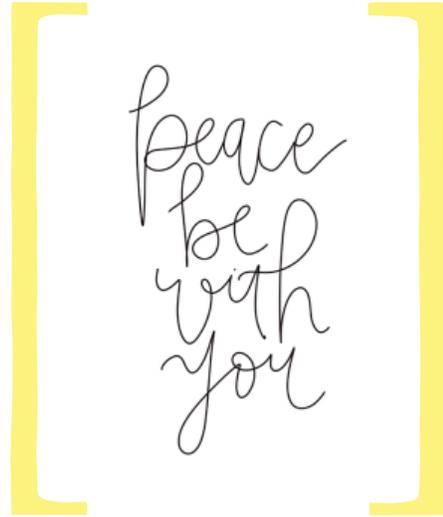
Suddenly, the light vanished just as quickly as it had materialized. Their bodies rigid with fear, the disciples clung to one another, slowly peeking through their eyelids. To their astonishment, before them stood a resplendent figure draped in white. He possessed the same comforting face and loving eyes that they had known for so many years; immediately, the disciples recognized him as Jesus.

Arms outstretched, Jesus declared, "Peace be with you." But the disciples began to back up, leaning against the nearest person or wooden beam for support. Several began to mutter to themselves that the figure before them must be a ghost. Seeing their terror, Jesus consoled

them, saying, “Why are you troubled? And why do questions arise in your hearts?”

Then, stepping forward further into the room, he presented his palms and feet for their inspection. “Look at my hands and feet, that it is I myself,” Jesus instructed them. Large gaping wounds remained in the spots where his skin had been pierced by nails, but they were no longer covered in blood and grime.

Grasping the hand of the nearest disciple, he emphasized his point by saying, “Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” The disciple started to pull away in fright, but after noticing that his hand did not pass through the body of Christ as it would through a ghost, he looked up at Jesus with an expression of awe. A wide smile began to spread across the disciple’s mouth, transforming his whole face.



Some of the disciples threw themselves to the ground, prostrating themselves before the Lord, but others hung back, incredulous for joy. Sensing their uncertainty, Jesus asked them, “Have you anything here to eat?” At his question, one of the disciples brought him a piece of baked fish, still warm and flaky from the fire. Taking the fish, Jesus ate it slowly in front of them. When he finished the last bit of fish on the plate, Jesus poured some water over his fingers and rinsed them clean.

Convinced of the Lord’s presence among them, the disciples began to rejoice and celebrate. Singing songs of praise and thanksgiving, the disciples marveled at the power of the Lord God. Then Jesus raised a hand to pause the celebration. Beckoning to the disciples to join him, he took a seat on the cold, hard floor.

Once they were all quietly seated, he reminded them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and in the prophets and psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he explained to them the Sacred Scriptures, illuminating their minds and hearts with the richness of the truth. The disciples were amazed as he revealed the depth and breadth of the Father’s Love and the glory of His plan throughout history.

Finally, Jesus exhorted them, saying, “Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”



[DAY SIX]
IT IS THE LORD

THE SIXTH DAY OF EASTER

JOHN 21:1 - 14

Clear your mind and center yourself in God's presence.

Read through the Gospel passage once. Then reread the Gospel again more slowly.

*From which perspective will you approach this story?
Perhaps you are Peter, Nathanael, one of the other disciples, Jesus, or a silent observer.*

Whomever you choose, enter into the story with a humble, open heart.

Be still.

And behold, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberius. Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples were trudging along the seashore. The cool waves of the sea lapped at their feet as they lamented and grieved together. His heart aching, Simon Peter cut the conversation short. Brushing his tangled, windswept hair out of his eyes, he dejectedly announced, "I'm going fishing."

While Peter advanced towards the dark, wet boat docked nearby, the other disciples called after him, "We also will come with you." One by one, they followed him onto the boat, setting out for sea. When the blackness of night set in, the disciples took shifts. Tossing their nets into the depths of the sea, they patiently waited for their bounty throughout the night, but they caught nothing. Eventually, the bright hues of sunrise began to paint the horizon,

causing the men to haul up their heavy nets into the boat and head towards shore.

As their boat neared the shore in the quiet of morning, a silver fog drifted in, obscuring their view. After a while, the fog parted and the disciples caught sight of a man standing at the edge of the sea. "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" the man called out to them. Warily, they responded, "No," without recognizing the man as Jesus.

With a small, cryptic chuckle, the man shouted out a command. "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." Perplexed, the disciples looked at one another. The sea floor was clearly visible over the side of the boat on a good day, so they knew the water was shallow in this location.

Frustrated by their failure to catch any fish the night before, the disciples shrugged to one another. *What do we have to lose?* their body language seemed to communicate. So they cast their net over the side of the boat as the man had instructed.

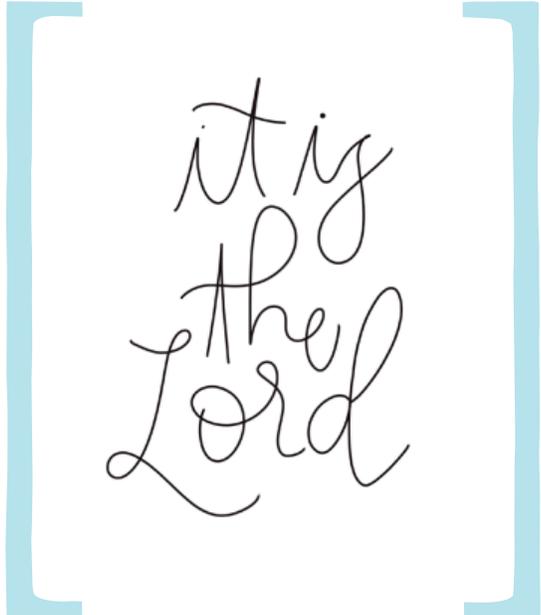
The net had scarcely been in the water for more than a few seconds before it seemed to leap out of their hands. With shouts of surprise and exhilaration, the disciples tugged with all of their might, calling out instructions to one another. Hand over hand, they yanked the net towards them, but it began to slip out of their grasp due to the number of fish. Hastily, they secured the end of the net to the boat and sat on it in order to avoid losing all of the fish.

Immediately, the disciple whom Jesus loved grabbed Peter by the shoulders and exclaimed, “It is the Lord.” When Simon Peter heard this statement, he ran his fingers through his hair with bewilderment. A wide grin spread across his face and he laughed with glee. Then he tucked in his garment and knotted it as tightly as he could, for he was lightly clad, and hurled himself into the sea. Peter began to swim towards the shore quickly, cutting through the waves with willpower.

The other disciples followed him in the boat, dragging the heavy net laden with fish behind them. As soon as the boat ran aground, the disciples leapt out of it and sprinted towards Jesus. They saw through the billowing smoke a fire pit with fish already on it, the tongues of fire leaping higher into the sky with each passing second. Jesus gestured towards the fire next to him, saying, “Bring some of the fish you just caught.”

So Simon Peter and the disciples went over to the net and worked together to drag it ashore. With their scales gleaming in the sunshine, the fish flopped from side to side on the shore. All together the fish numbered one hundred and fifty-three and were larger than any the disciples had ever seen before. Amazingly, even though there were so many fish, the net remained intact and free of rips!

Then Jesus urged, “Come, have breakfast,” and handed each man a chunk of thick, delicious bread. None of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew that he was the Lord. Elated, the disciples beamed at Jesus as he distributed bits of bread and fish. As the men reclined together by the fire they wondered privately at his presence among them. This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.



it is
the
Lord

The background is an abstract watercolor composition. It features large, irregular washes of color in shades of orange, blue, green, and red. The colors are layered and blended, creating a sense of depth and movement. There are also smaller, more defined shapes and splatters of color scattered throughout the composition. The overall effect is vibrant and artistic.

[DAY SEVEN]
PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

THE SEVENTH DAY OF EASTER

MARK 16:9 - 15

Over the past week, the Gospel readings have challenged you to imagine what it is like to be fully present in Christ's presence.

Today, it is your turn. We want to encourage you to be still with Christ.

In today's Gospel, Jesus appears over and over again to the disciples. As you read, visualize Jesus appearing to each of the disciples.

When Jesus had risen, early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons. She went and told his companions who were mourning and weeping. When they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

After this he appeared in another form to two of them walking along on their way to the country. They returned and told the others; but they did not believe them either.

But later, as the Eleven were at table, he appeared to them and rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart because they had not believed those who saw him after he had been raised. He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature."

Now that you've finished visualizing the Gospel reading, pause. With your imagination, envision Jesus appearing to you wherever you are right now. What would it truly be like to sit next to Jesus, right here, right now?

This prompt may seem challenging or uncomfortable, but we encourage you to simply try. Take a deep breath and then begin. Share your heart with him

The background is an abstract watercolor composition. It features large, irregular washes of color in shades of orange, red, blue, green, and yellow. The colors are layered and blended, creating a sense of depth and movement. There are also smaller, more defined shapes and splatters scattered throughout, adding to the overall texture and visual interest. The overall effect is vibrant and artistic.

[DAY EIGHT]
RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

THE EIGHTH DAY OF EASTER

JOHN 20:19-31

Clear your mind and center yourself in God's presence.

Read through the Gospel passage once. Then reread the Gospel again more slowly.

From which perspective will you approach this story? Perhaps you are Thomas or Jesus. Perhaps you are one of the other disciples or a silent observer.

Whomever you choose, enter into the story with a humble, open heart.

Be still.

When the stars dotted the night sky on the first day of that week, the disciples left their homes and rushed down the deserted streets of Jerusalem, their sandals kicking up dust behind them. All of the disciples moved stealthily, ducking behind doorways and hugging the shadows of the buildings as they made their way to their destination. Upon arriving at the house, the disciples crept up the creaking stairs into the upper room.

Finally gathered together in one place, they yanked the door shut behind them and bolted it firmly. Several of the disciples moved automatically towards the heavy wooden tables that occupied the middle of the room. Together, they hauled the furniture toward the door and windows, scratching the floor in the process. Once the furniture sufficiently blocked all of the entrances to the room, the men turned toward one another.

Their expressions revealed just how much the men had aged over the past few days. Deep bags were set under each man's eyes. Many of the disciples were disheveled in appearance with scraggly hair and dirt covered clothes. As they comforted one another, tears glistened on their cheeks. Fear filled their hearts as they reflected on the death and burial of their dear friend. In hushed tones, they worried that the Jews might also seek to put them to death. The combination of terror and grief made it almost difficult to breathe at times.

Suddenly, a strong, rushing wind entered the room, knocking the disciples to their feet. A bright light encompassed Jesus as he appeared in their midst. Shocked, the disciples cried out in fear, shielding their eyes from the rays of light. Calmly, Jesus offered them a greeting. “Peace be with you,” he declared. Many of the disciples crouched low to the ground, afraid to approach him. Extending his arms towards them, he showed them his hands and his side.

Jesus spoke again, reassuring them, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Cautiously, the disciples rose to their feet. Jesus embraced each disciple warmly and acknowledged them by name. Gently, he placed his hand on each disciple’s shoulder, breathed on him, and commanded, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain and retained.” Then he launched in a powerful and colorful description of the meaning of the Scriptures and called them to go forth and proclaim the glorious news.

One of the twelve disciples, Thomas was not with the other disciples when Jesus appeared in their midst. When his friends shared with him the joyful news of Jesus’ resurrection, saying, “We have seen the Lord,” he merely shook his head in disbelief. In a low, sorrowful tone, he scolded them and tried to reason with them. Gesticulating wildly, he pointed out all of the reasons why they must be wrong. When he failed to persuade them, he declared boldly, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into his nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

A week later, the disciples gathered and locked themselves in the upper room, once again bolting the door and hiding from the Jews. This time, Thomas was among the disciples who cowered in the darkened corner of the room. As they whispered amongst themselves, Jesus again appeared before the disciples. Addressing them in the same manner as he had a week ago, Jesus exclaimed, “Peace be with you.”

As the disciples lay at Jesus’ feet and worshipped him, a lone figure stood along the wall, stunned into silence, eyeing Jesus with trepidation. Thomas kept his distance, thinking Jesus to be a ghost or a cruel trick. Jesus gestured towards Thomas and called him out of his trance. “Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.”

Stumbling forward and nervously wringing his hands, Thomas skeptically approached Jesus. Perplexed, he paused several feet away and scrutinized Jesus’ face. Then he

looked questioningly at Jesus. Nodding resolutely, Jesus' urged Thomas to approach Him.

Thomas reached out, delicately placing his fingers into Jesus' yawning wounds. Marveling, he observed his hand travel into each wound of Jesus and caress Jesus' smooth skin. Falling to his knees, Thomas bent his lips to Jesus' feet. His eyes brimming with tears, Thomas trembled

and stammered in a hoarse voice, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus sighed heavily and ran his fingers through his hair. Reaching down, he patted Thomas on the back and commanded him to stand up. He touched Thomas' face lovingly and then raised one finger in admonishment. "Have you come to believe because you have seen me?" Jesus scolded Thomas. Indicating the other disciples kneeling around the room,

Jesus reminded him, "Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

After sitting with his friends and opening their minds to the glories of Scripture, Jesus worked many other signs and miracles that are not written in the Gospels. All of the disciples were astounded at the depth of his knowledge of scripture and of their own hearts. Jubilantly, they soaked up all that he could teach them. But this particular story is written so that you may come to believe in your heart, mind, and soul that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief, you may have life in his name.



Receive
the
Holy
Spirit

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

KARA BECKER

Kara, co-founder of the Live Today Well Collective, graduated from Belmont Abbey College with degrees in Elementary Education and Theology. Currently, she lives in the great land of the pines, where she drinks copious amounts of sweet tea and indulges in too much southern comfort food. Though she comes from a background of parish based ministry, her most treasured roles are that of wife to her husband Michael and mother to her almost two-year old son, Andrew.

Kara is passionate about living out each day with prayerful intention and stripping away the excess in order to focus on what matters most - her faith and her family. You can find her musings on faith, minimalism, organization, and intentional living on her blog, Pursuing Purpose.

In her downtime, Kara enjoys curling up on the couch with a good book, writing, hiking, playing board games with her family, and belting out songs from musicals.

You can find Kara online at pursuingpurposeblog.com or visit her on Instagram @pursuingpurposeblog.

MARY WILLIAMS

Mary Williams, co-founder of the Live Today Well Collective, is the artist and author behind Creating To Love and the creator of The Examen Journal and the Ruah series. Her educational experiences at Notre Dame and Boston College deeply formed her spirituality. The inherent beauty of God's creation inspires her daily. She firmly believes the act of creating has the power to transform the human heart.

Before becoming a stay-at-home mom to her two beautiful children, she worked in Catholic college and high school campus ministry. While she misses the spontaneity of working in student life, she loves the constant sound of happy little feet running around her.

Mary is happiest when her little family is cuddled up all together, when she has a paintbrush in her hand, and when she's sipping her homemade cold brew coffee with probably a little too much creamer. She currently calls Southern California her home.

Meet Mary by visiting creatingtolove.com or @creatingtolove on Instagram.



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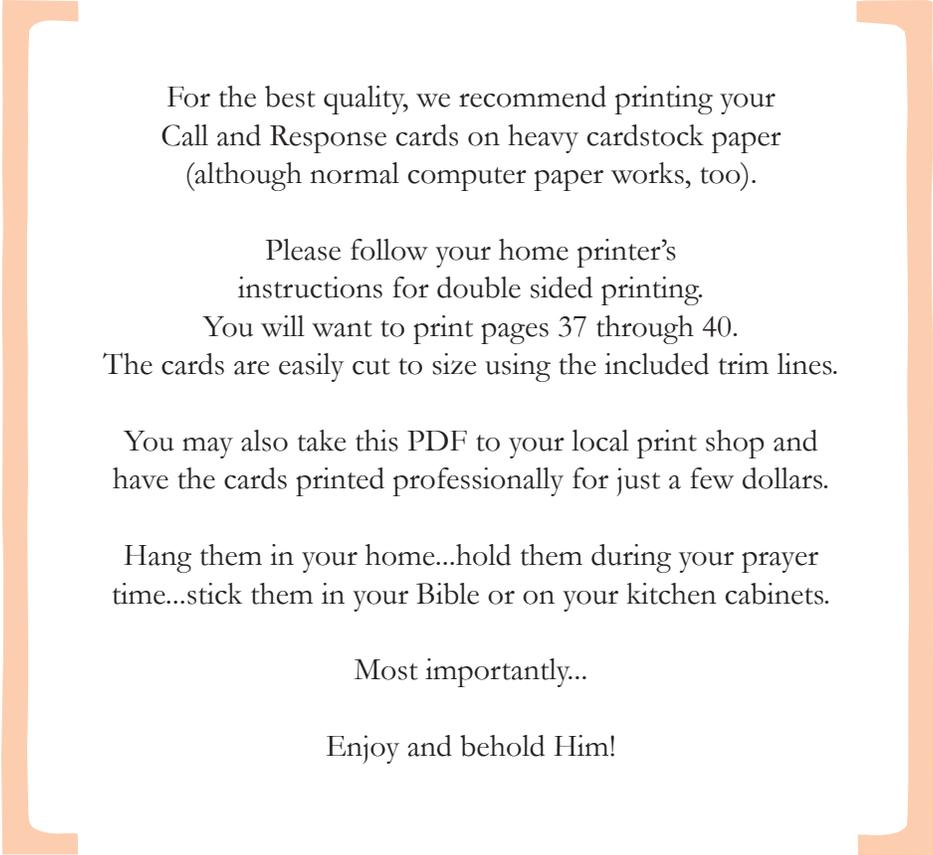
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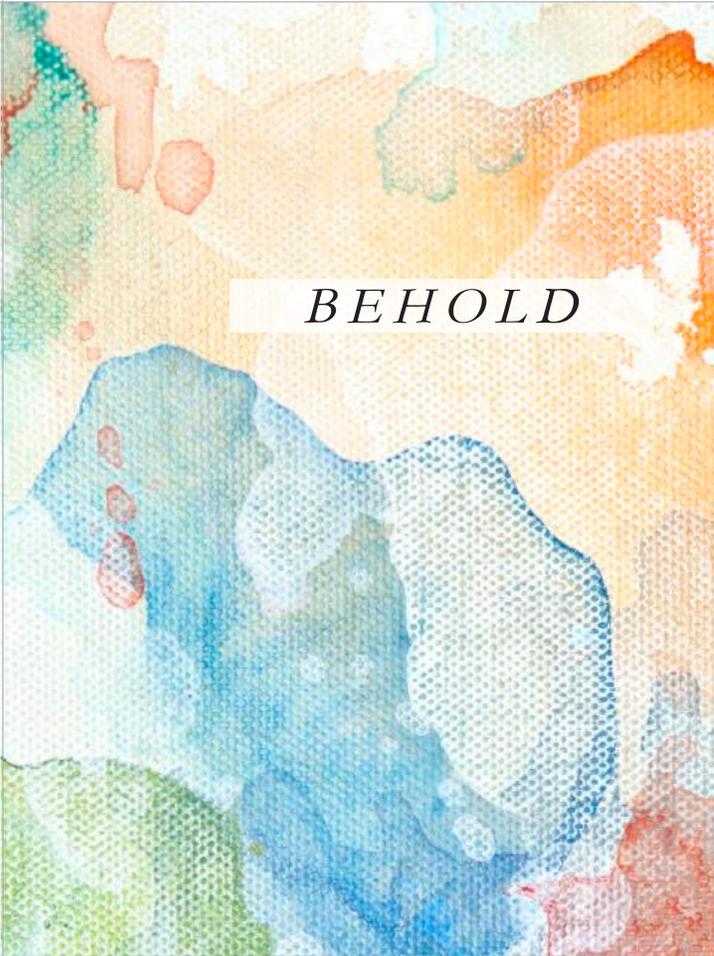
Please follow your home printer's instructions for double sided printing. You will want to print pages 37 through 40. The cards are easily cut to size using the included trim lines.

You may also take this PDF to your local print shop and have the cards printed professionally for just a few dollars.

Hang them in your home...hold them during your prayer time...stick them in your Bible or on your kitchen cabinets.

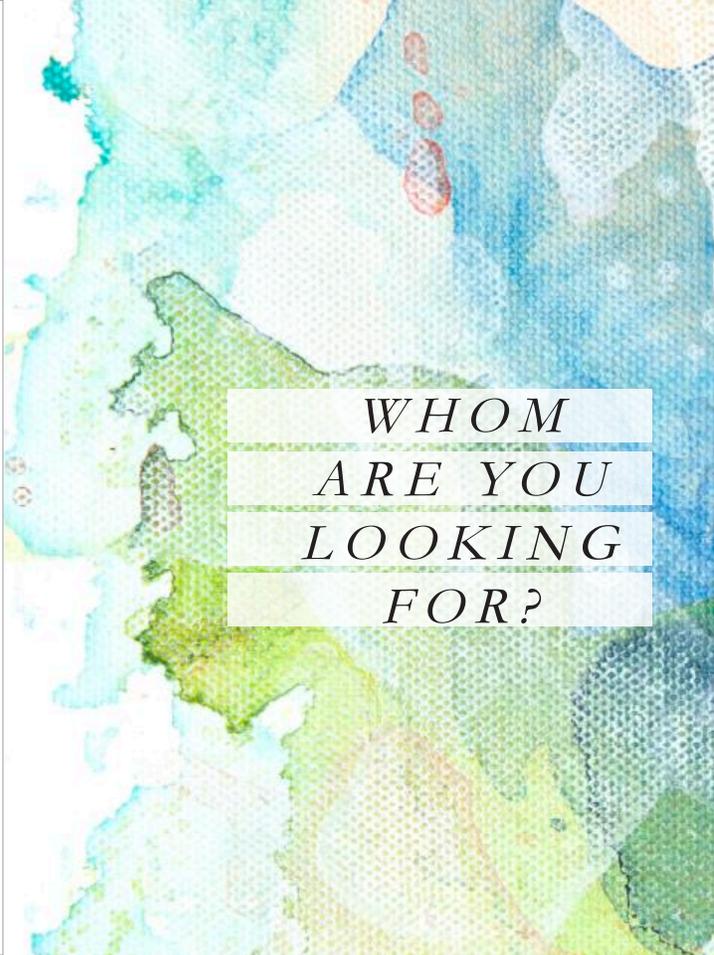
Most importantly...

Enjoy and behold Him!



BEHOLD

*do
not
be
afraid*



*WHOM
ARE YOU
LOOKING
FOR?*

*were
not
your
hearts
burning
within
us*

BEHOLD
The Second Day of Easter
Matthew 28:8-15

[DO NOT
BE AFRAID]

CALL

What events or struggles in your life are making you fearful, uncomfortable, or nervous?

RESPOND

Name your fears out loud and surrender them to Jesus and His tender mercy. Rejoice in the knowledge that He desires to shower you with His peace.

BEHOLD
The First Day of Easter
Mark 16:1-7

[BEHOLD]

CALL

What is it that you seek when you come before God in prayer?

RESPOND

God doesn't always answer our prayers in the ways we expect. Open your heart to all the ways He might be answering your current prayers by reflecting on the past. How has He been faithful to your requests in the past?

BEHOLD
The Fourth Day of Easter
Luke 24:13-35

[WERE NOT OUR
HEARTS BURNING
WITHIN US?]

CALL

Have you ever felt on fire for God and your faith? Recall the experience in detail.

RESPOND

You are both the recipient and giver of Jesus in the world. Think of one person that you can shine Jesus' love on today. Also, pay attention to how others lead you closer to Him today.

BEHOLD
The Third Day of Easter
John 20:11-18

[WHOM ARE YOU
LOOKING FOR?]

CALL

When you imagine the newly resurrected Jesus, what do you see?

RESPOND

Reflect on the past 24 hours. Identify specific examples of moments when you felt Christ working in and through your daily routine. Bring these moments to Jesus and thank him for remaining with you.



*PEACE
BE WITH
YOU*

*PROCLAIM
THE
GOSPEL*

*it is
the
Lord*

*receive
the
Holy
Spirit*

BEHOLD
The Sixth Day of Easter
John 21:1-14

[IT IS
THE LORD]

CALL

*How much do I trust Jesus?
Do I always respond to Jesus' commands immediately?*

RESPOND

*Reflect on a time when you placed your trust fully
in another person even when it was difficult.
What was that like for you? Ask Jesus to increase
your trust in Him today.*

BEHOLD
The Fifth Day of Easter
Luke 24:35-48

[PEACE BE
WITH YOU]

CALL

Is there a part of your faith that needs strengthening?

RESPOND

*Pick one concrete action that you can
take today to strengthen your faith.
Ask Jesus to shower you with His grace and peace.*

BEHOLD
The Eighth Day of Easter
John 20:19-31

[RECEIVE THE
HOLY SPIRIT]

CALL

*What has the Lord revealed to you over the past week?
How has this type of prayer impacted your heart?*

RESPOND

*Reflect on a few concrete ways you could carve out
time for God over the rest of this Easter Season.
As we move towards Pentecost, ask Him
to create in you a new spirit.*

BEHOLD
The Seventh Day of Easter
Mark 16:9-15

[PROCLAIM
THE GOSPEL]

CALL

Who is Jesus to you?

RESPOND

*Take a moment and reflect on how Jesus appears to you
in your own day to day life. Thank and praise him for
how he repeatedly shows up for you, in you, and with you.*