



FACES OF OUR FAITH

STUDY JOURNAL

ART, REFLECTIONS, & PROMPTS
FOR 16 LESSER-KNOWN STORIES
THAT HAVE SHAPED OUR FAITH

 *Sanctified Art*
sanctifiedart.org

A Sanctified Art LLC is a collective of artists in ministry who create resources for worshiping communities. The Sanctified Art team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God.

Learn more about their work at sanctifiedart.org.



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There are many heroes of the faith, people we admire and wish to be. However, there are even more ordinary people of faith—those doing what they can with what they have to make a difference. We've selected 16 bold stories of those often overlooked in our biblical narratives. Using visual art and prompts for reflection, we hope to dig deep into the worlds of these characters, entering their stories with curiosity and openness to what they might teach us.

We have arranged the stories so that they have a narrative arc beginning with Genesis and the Hebrew stories, moving to the minor characters in the backdrop of Jesus' birth and death, and concluding with the apostles and Christians who emerged in the years after the resurrection. We invite you to complete this journal at the pace and order that suits you. You may wish to ponder the reflections and prompts individually or with others. We have designed this journal so that it might be used as a personal devotional or as the curriculum for a group study series.

As we journey with these characters, may they remind us that we all play a role in shaping God's story of redemption and grace. May they awaken us to the faces of our faith in our world today. May they encourage us to know that no action is ever too small to make a difference.

Artfully yours,

The Sanctified Art Creative Team

Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Sarah Are

Hannah Garrity

Lauren Wright Pittman



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FACES OF MY FAITH

PERSONAL REFLECTION

As you journey with the biblical characters in this series, we invite you to name the faces of your own faith and reflect on how they have impacted you. You may wish to name friends, family members, mentors, pastors, public figures, strangers—consider anyone and everyone who has made a lasting impact on your faith.

face of my faith:

impact _____

face of my faith:

impact _____

face of my faith:

impact



face of my faith:

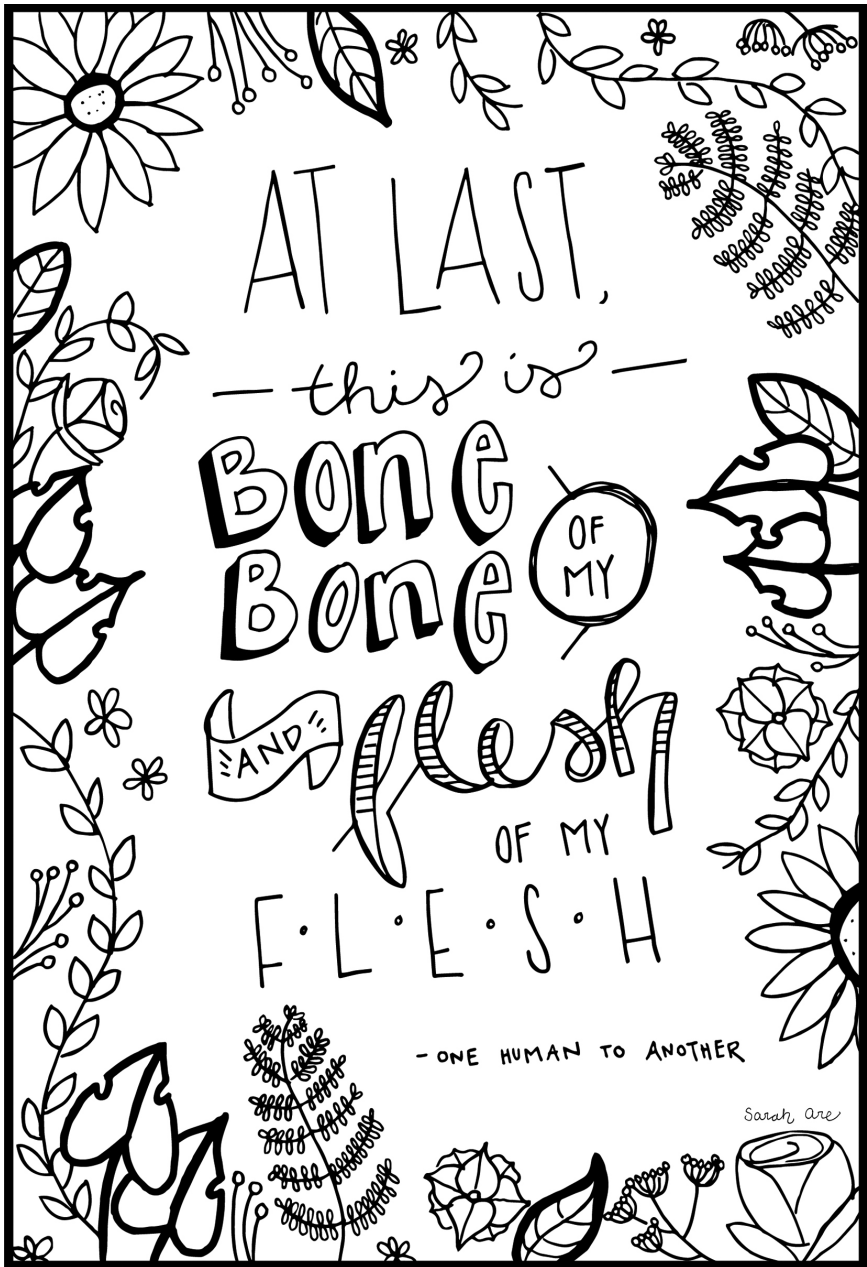
impact



face of my faith:

impact





At Last | Sarah Are



FACES OF OUR FAITH

ADAM & EVE

read GENESIS 2:4b-35

from the artist | SARAH ARE

I love this story of Adam and Eve.

For generations people have abused this story, trying to imply that women are less than men because Eve came second, but that is not the point of this story. The power of this story is not in the order. The power of this story is in a God that saw how humans need one another, and in Adam's first testimony of belonging.

Before Eve, Adam was alone—truly alone—and you and I both know that we as humans *need* one another. It's the way we're wired!

God sees Adam's isolation and responds. God transforms that deep human loneliness into deep human belonging through new creation.

What amazes me most about this story is Adam's response. It would be so human of Adam to focus on their differences, to be hesitant in his welcome, or to act superior for being made first. However, instead of focusing on their differences, Adam immediately celebrates their connection. It's as if Adam says, "At last! I have been waiting for someone to belong to, and even though we look different, we are made from the same God, so you and I, we belong together."

Can't you just hear Adam's sigh of relief? Can't you imagine how deeply his heart must have ached in his own human isolation, and how quickly that must have changed at the sight of her face?

I wonder just how different this world would be if we saw strangers and friends like Adam sees Eve. You the refugee, you the convict; you who is black or white, old or young, gay or straight—you are bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. You and I, we belong together. May we never forget it.



RESPOND

ADAM & EVE

look

Color in the imagery on the page, reflecting on the meaning of the words, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.”

reflect

- Compare this creation account to the one in Genesis 1. What similarities do you notice? What differences? Why do you think there are two accounts of creation in Genesis?
- What are some of the ways you have heard this scripture interpreted in churches and our culture? Do you agree or disagree with the artist’s reflection?
- If you were to imagine yourself as Adam in this story, who immediately comes to mind when you say, “At last! This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”? Name any persons you hold close to your heart.



They Said No | Lisle Gwynn Garrity



FACES OF OUR FAITH

SHIPHRAH & PUAH

read EXODUS 1:8-22

from the artist | LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

Pharaoh's plan is a clever one. In an attempt to obliterate the Hebrews, he enlists midwives to pull a quick-handed maneuver by smothering any Hebrew baby boys seconds after birth so that their mothers will believe they are stillborn. The more this happens, the more the Hebrew people will believe that their fertility—their life-force—is diminished. Progeny was everything, for the ability to procreate determined the survival, legacy, and strength of a tribe. Pharaoh doesn't just want them dead, he wants to eradicate their identity, their resilience.

But, instead, two gutsy women throw a wrench in his plans. Shiphrah and Puah are the only women in this story to be named, which we know is a rarity in scripture, so when it happens, it's as if the author is flashing blinking lights on the page that say, "Pay attention to them!" What we see is the first known instance of civil disobedience in recorded history. They say no.

These midwives, these lowest-of-the-low-status-women who likely had no husbands, who were simply glorified servants, who, themselves, may have been deemed infertile and therefore useless to a family system, risk everything to say no.

Through this simple but mighty act, they change the course of history so that, many, many years later, another baby boy born into a dark world of genocide might also survive and flourish and grow up to redeem the world.

In this painting, these hands represent the women's resistance. They are the hands that said no to a power-hungry ruler but yes to a God of justice—to a God who transforms a story of massacre into one of liberation. The impact of their actions, like the waters of the Nile, ripples out far beyond them.



RESPOND

SHIPHRAH & PUAH

look

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Sit still in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form. Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Now engage your imagination. If you were to place yourself in this scene, where would you be and how would you interact with what surrounds you?

reflect

- Imagine this story from the perspectives of Shiphrah and Puah. What did they have to give up by disobeying Pharaoh? What did they gain?
- We live in a culture that generally praises obedience and loyalty to elders and those in positions of power. Name instances that merit disobedience. How do you determine if you should comply or resist? How do you discern God's will in these situations?
- Can you name other figures throughout time who have taken a stand against unjust rulers or governments? What has been the impact of their actions?



They Stood | Lauren Wright Pittman



FACES OF OUR FAITH

DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD

read NUMBERS 27:1-11

from the artist | LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

I imagine the daughters had to fill the entire tent in order to be heard. I imagine Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah took the shape of the tent of meeting, a place where they were met by powerful men, a place of sacrifice and worship—not a place where a woman’s voice was often heard. The text says the women came forward; they stood, they spoke, they questioned, and they even demanded. Any one of those actions alone is difficult for the unseen and unheard. All they wanted was to receive the inheritance of their father and to keep his name from fading. I’m sure the pain of their father’s death was potent, but they needed to be recognized, valued, and seen as human beings in order to survive.

The catalyst for this moment isn’t only the women’s strength; it also took a man in power to listen, to open his heart, to wrestle, and to offer his grasp over this patriarchal law to God. When Moses offered up his control and dared to consider a new way, God heard the voices of these women. “They are right,” God said. The old law was no longer suitable, so God made way for change. Though the laws were probably carved into stone, God shows us in this text that the law is living, breathing, adaptable, and changing. This text invites us to come forward, to stand, to speak, to question, and to demand change when we experience injustice. When the powers in place don’t budge, that is not the end of the story. When you personally aren’t experiencing injustice, that does not mean you should bask in your comfort. For those whose voices are less valued, for those who go unseen, for those who have fought a long and continuing fight, we must breathe life into those old, tired, worn-out laws. In this image, the winds of change, the breath of God, surrounds the tent of meeting and the voice of God descends on these women, hearing their cry. New life sprouts from the ground as the law is heard afresh.



RESPOND

DAUGHTERS OF ZELOPHEHAD

look

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Sit still in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form. Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Now engage your imagination. What story would you assign to each of the figures?

reflect

- Look again at the daughters' words and actions. How do they make their case before Moses? What rationale do they present? How might this new law affect their tribe as a whole?
- In his famous *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. argues the differences between just and unjust laws. How do you discern the difference between laws that are just and unjust? How does God define what is just? What current laws might need to be re-examined?
- Name women throughout history who have advocated for women's rights and effected change.



In Tune | Lauren Wright Pittman



FACES OF OUR FAITH

DEBORAH

read JUDGES 4-5

from the artist | LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

In the midst of the oppression of her people, Deborah creates space for channeling God's wisdom. In the chaos of war she finds stillness under a palm tree and tunes herself to God's voice.

When I'm in far less stressful situations than direct oppression and imminent war, I struggle to remember to turn to God for council or comfort. In response to anxiety, instead of fostering an environment to receive God's direction, I often turn inward and try to carry the burden of the world on my own. I also have a hard time trusting my intuition. When I feel a tugging on my heart, I often ignore it, devaluing my thoughts, insights, and emotions, and because of this, I fear I miss God's movement altogether.

The wisdom of Deborah lies in her willingness to create space. Deborah shows us that, in stillness, practicing attending to God with fierce trust, we can sift through the chaos of this world and align ourselves with the movement of God.

Create spaces for yourself where you can get in tune with God. Trust your intuition, share your insights with others, and use your voice. When you feel God tugging on your heart and calling you to move, try practicing fierce trust and leaving your comfort zone.

In this image, Deborah stands firm under her palm tree with her hand open, signifying her openness to God's wisdom and to sharing her voice with others. The chariots of war loom in the distance, but the chariots are empty because, in the midst of impending war, this prophetess can see God's victory before it even takes place.



RESPOND

DEBORAH

look

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Sit still in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form. Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Now engage your imagination. What story do you give to the figure?

reflect

- Deborah was the fourth Judge of pre-monarchic Israel and the only female judge named in the bible. Analyze her leadership style. How does she guide the Israelites toward victory?
- What parts of this story make you feel uncomfortable? What parts surprise you?
- Deborah's song is one of the earliest samples of Hebrew poetry, perhaps dating back to the 12th century BCE. What is the significance of her leadership and authority?



| Dance Alone | Hannah Garrity



FACES OF OUR FAITH

QUEEN VASHTI

read ESTHER 1-2:17

from the artist | HANNAH GARRITY

Having the bravery and confidence to stand up to an inappropriate request from a superior is both paramount to the moral foundation of society, and extremely difficult. We each know deep down when we are doing right or wrong.

In this text, Vashti's modesty and fearlessness resonated with me. I imagined her recognizing that her husband's demand for her to show her beauty to his drunken friends overstepped his bounds.

Her simple reply, "no," is feared by the male "sages who knew the laws" (Esther 1:13). They advise the king to cast Queen Vashti out and to replace her with a new queen.

Here I have represented Vashti dancing alone. I see her living into her refusal with grace and beauty, exhibiting independence and strength in her solitary righteousness.



RESPOND

QUEEN VASHTI

look

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Sit still in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form. Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Now engage your imagination. If you were to place yourself in this scene, where would you be and how would you interact with what surrounds you?

reflect

- Consider the power dynamics in this story. Who holds power? How do those with power seek to maintain it?
- The Book of Esther and The Song of Songs are the only books in the bible that do not explicitly mention God. Where do you imagine God is present in this story?
- What might this story have to say in light of the #MeToo movement and those who have survived sexual assault and abuse?



The Fire Inside | Hannah Garrity



FACES OF OUR FAITH

SHADRACH, MESHACH, & ABEDNEGO

read DANIEL 3

from the artist | HANNAH GARRITY

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego exemplified courage as they walked with the presence of God among the flames. Their trust in God overcame the human tendency to fear. This painting portrays the grandeur of God intersecting with the fearfulness of humanity. "Be not afraid" is a notable refrain in the bible. It speaks to the utmost importance of courage and the weighty influence of fear on our actions. In this image I tackle a meeting between God and fear. Each face presents a determined expression in the face of adversity. God's impervious and emboldening courage is represented by a landscape in the background. Panels of translucency hide God's fearlessness from us intermittently. The panels and open spaces represent the struggle with fear and fearlessness that we face as human beings. The faces of determination, faces strengthened by God's courage, emerge in the space where our view of God's strength is blocked. Here, our human struggle with fear is personified in the positive. Even when we cannot clearly see, God's courage is within us.



RESPOND

SHADRACH, MESHACH, & ABEDNEGO

look

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reflect

- What are the consequences of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's resistance? What occurs as a result of them refusing to bow to the King's statue?
- What specific fears do you imagine Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego experiencing in this story?
- What symbols, figures, or objects are we tempted to worship or idolize today?



gracious
AND
compassionate

JONAH 4:2

I Knew You Were | Sarah Are



FACES OF OUR FAITH

JONAH

read JONAH 1-4

from the artist | SARAH ARE

I learned the story of Jonah as a child at summer Vacation Bible School. I was taught that Jonah was a young prophet called by God for a big task—a task so big that Jonah ran in fear. While some of that may be true, in recent years, I have learned another side to the story.

What I did not know as a child was that Jonah was not necessarily afraid of his call, but was reluctant to show his enemy grace. Jonah did not like the Ninevites—those to whom God had called him to prophesy. They were brutal people. Why would anyone want to give such brutal and violent people a second chance?

Jonah's hatred of the Ninevite people led me to include the figs, which are a biblical symbol for Israel, and the whale, a symbol of Jonah's deep resentment, encompassed by Jonah's testimony about God (Jonah 4:2). In this verse, Jonah confesses to God, "That is why I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love."

This story is about a man who was reluctant to forgive, and a God who is so loving that grace and forgiveness are the only option. It's a powerful truth.

May this story, and Jonah's grudge, remind us of all the ways in which we need saving. May it remind us just how good and compassionate our God truly is, for not a day goes by when I don't need that same unrelenting grace that God showed Jonah and the Ninevites.



RESPOND

JONAH

look

Color in the imagery on the page, reflecting on Jonah's confession to God, "I knew you were gracious and compassionate" (Jonah 4: 2)

reflect

- What symbolism or meaning do you find in Jonah's journey into and out of the great fish who swallows him?
- Tarshish, a city on the southern tip of Spain, was nearly 3,000 miles across the Mediterranean Sea from Nineveh, a city of Assyria. Jonah attempted to flee to the farthest away point known in the ancient world. Have you ever run from God or avoided something you felt God was calling you to?
- Consider who your modern-day Ninevehs might be—people, places, situations, countries—that are tempting to deem brutal or undeserving of God's grace.



write

Consider a person or situation that causes you to feel angry. In the space below, offer your anger to God through words or doodles.



pray

When I am swallowed whole by my own resentment and anger, may I remember that your grace is for everyone, including me. Amen.



Anna the Prophetess | Lisle Gwynn Garrity



FACES OF OUR FAITH

ANNA

read LUKE 2:21-38

from the artist | LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

Perhaps being at the end of her life helped her to see the world with eyes sharpened for the holy. Perhaps living most of her years as a widow kept her hiding in the shadows, to keep from taking up too much space, when Simeon approached first to announce praise and prophecies on behalf of the newborn child. Perhaps being a prophet made her both patient and persistent, trusting that the right moment to share her wisdom would, indeed, come.

The moment came, for there was *also* a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel. Luke could have easily left Anna out of the story. But she leans in—from the margins, from the shadows, from the edges of the scene to approach her newborn king.

Perhaps Luke knew that those on the outside seemed to have the nearest access to Jesus. Those on the margins saw what others could not yet see. They knew without really knowing, because it was the kind of knowledge that shifts the chemistry of your heart.

She saw and she knew, so she lived out her days giving thanks for the promise of a world made new.

When drawing this image, I referenced photographs of Mother Teresa because I imagine her, like Anna a few centuries before, having eyes for the divine and devoting her entire life to pointing it out for others.



RESPOND

ANNA

look

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Sit still in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form. Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Now engage your imagination. What story do you give to the figure?

reflect

- Why do you think Luke included the accounts of Simeon and Anna meeting the newborn Christ? Why were these details important enough to include when telling how Mary and Joseph presented Jesus at the Temple?
- What do you think prepared Anna to recognize the Messiah? What circumstances and practices led her to this holy encounter?
- The artist names Mother Teresa as someone with eyes for the divine. Can you name others who have spent their lives pointing to where God shows up in the world?



The Kiss | Lauren Wright Pittman



FACES OF OUR FAITH

JUDAS ISCARIOT

read MARK 14:1-2, 10-50

from the artist | LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

I get really emotional when I think about Judas. I think my emotion stems from a painting I saw in Florence, Italy, called “The Kiss of Judas” by Giuseppe Montanari. It’s an ethereal, dreamy image of a tender moment. Time seems suspended, stars twinkle in the sky, and the figures of Jesus and Judas almost float in the bittersweet haze of this passing moment. Judas stands on his tiptoes, though he is larger than Jesus, and kisses his teacher and friend. If you didn’t know who these figures were, you might think this was an idyllic, simple moment, but it is so grievous and complicated. This image makes me cry. I have a guttural turning in my stomach when I think about Judas and his role in this narrative.

I feel like Judas represents those who are afraid to stand up against the powerful. He allows fear to move him. He faces torture and death by aligning himself with Jesus and does what I think a lot of us would do. A lot of us would choose safety and betrayal instead of the path of suffering for a fight that seems impossible to win. In Matthew’s account of this story, Judas kills himself because he can’t survive knowing what he has done; he can’t live with himself. The echoes of his decision continue to reverberate and he is the vilified scapegoat of our faith.

I think we act like Judas in passing moments every day. That’s why I drew this image. That’s why I love the image by Montanari; it humanizes Judas and forces us to face the relationship Judas had with Jesus, to face our relationship with Jesus. Judas’ relationship is fraught, complicated, and ultimately tragic, but I know there were moments of beauty.



RESPOND

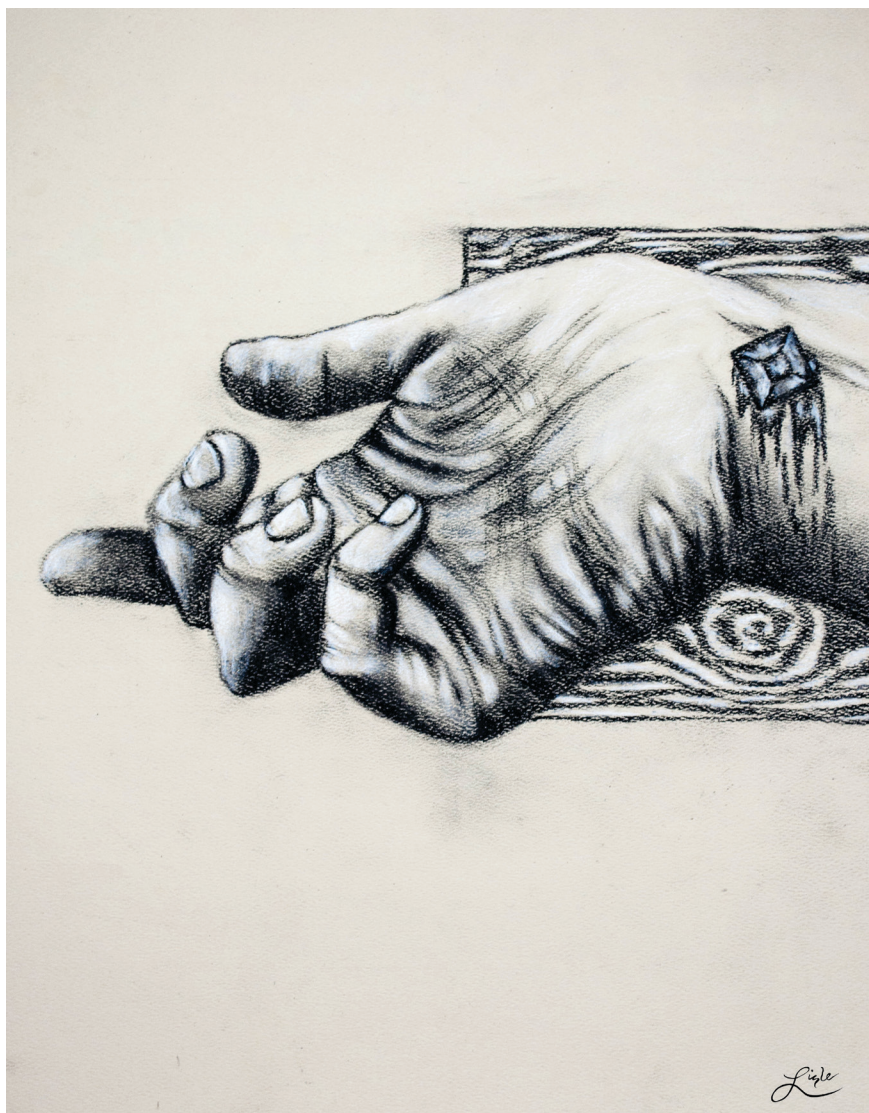
JUDAS ISCARIOT

look

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reflect

- Several events happen after Judas decides to sell out to the chief priests. Why do you think he ultimately went through with it? Why didn't he change his mind?
- Look up "The Kiss of Judas" by Giuseppe Montanari. Compare and contrast this image to the one created by Lauren Wright Pittman.
- Reflect on an instance when fear caused you to act in a way you regret. What have you learned from that experience?



The Penitent Thief | Lisle Gwynn Garrity



FACES OF OUR FAITH

THE PENITENT THIEF ON THE CROSS

read LUKE 23:32-43

from the artist | LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

How did he know?

Before he committed his crime, had he heard? Had he heard of the One who healed and loved and came to turn the world upside down? Or was it during the hike to Calvary hill, the beams of his cross digging deep into his flesh, that he saw the crowds swell for the One before him and he knew, for the first time, the weight of systemic injustice?

Or was it while they nailed them in, the piercing hammer pounding his own body to contort and heave, that he saw his neighbor in perfect silence, hanging as if weightless in the air?

Or was it when he heard, “Forgive them, Father,” the words pouring down like a warm bath?

Or was it when the other mocked him, blood and hate and profane humanity spewing from his mouth, that the contrast made the divine palpable and quite easy to perceive?

How did he know that the One dying alongside him was blameless? How did he know he was the Christ?

Regardless of how, he was convinced of it the way death makes all things clear. So he told the truth—about his own brokenness and the suffering Savior beside him—opening himself to redemption, pointing to the One who might bestow it.



RESPOND

THE PENITENT THIEF ON THE CROSS

look

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reflect

- When and how do you imagine the penitent thief knew Jesus was the Christ?
- Why do you think the other criminal joins the crowd in mocking Jesus? What feelings, fears, and needs might be driving his behavior?
- Consider a time when you have taken a risk to tell the truth. What were the outcomes of your confession?



Joseph of Arimathea | Hannah Garrity



FACES OF OUR FAITH

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

read LUKE 23:44-56

from the artist | HANNAH GARRITY

How heavy is the body of a dead man? Only with superhuman strength would this pose be possible. Yet, Joseph of Arimathea alone carries Jesus' lifeless body. How did he do it? Why did he do it? Luke says, "He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God" (Luke 23:51). Is this act good enough?

He was on the council. He disagreed with the majority. Why could he not stop the crucifixion from happening in the first place? Why did he fail to convince his fellow council members? Is this good deed enough to make up for such a monumental failure?

Or is Joseph of Arimathea at the right place at the right time? Is he able to dignify Jesus' body after death? Does he play the vital role of the dissenter, picking up the pieces of the wrongs of the group? Does Joseph forward God's plan for Jesus' death and resurrection?

How weighty a task. What superhuman strength must we each have to forward God's plan. Yet, God prepares us. We are ready.



RESPOND

JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA

look

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Sit still in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form. Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Now engage your imagination. If you were to place yourself in this scene, where would you be and how would you interact with what surrounds you?

reflect

- Do you think Joseph is complicit in Jesus' death? Or do you think he did everything within his power to do the right thing?
- According to Luke, Jesus' acquaintances remain at a distance after his death, while Joseph goes to Pilate to retrieve Jesus' body and uses his own resources to prepare a proper burial. What did he risk by performing these actions?
- Name a public figure or someone you know who has risked his/her reputation, wealth, or status to do the right thing.



Arisen | Hannah Garrity



FACES OF OUR FAITH

MARY MAGDALENE

read MARK 16:1-11

from the artist | HANNAH GARRITY

Seeing is believing. Believing without seeing is a truly human failing that God asks us to overcome. It is the failing of the followers of Jesus who come to realize that Jesus, whom they betrayed days earlier, is, in fact, who he says he is. He is, in fact, who they have always believed he was.

Why are we so cynical? Is our cynicism an effort to check our sources? None of us want to be taken in by a ruse, so I understand the viewpoint of a doubting Thomas. I understand why the followers disbelieved Mary. I would have wanted proof as well, especially if I was ashamed of my behavior, as they surely were. But why did she believe?

In this image, Mary Magdalene appears surprised. She also seems wiser and more aware in this moment as she looks toward Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified two days prior. How had he rolled away the stone? This was truly a miracle! In this moment, Mary knows. Jesus must have looked like himself. She never wonders if she is dreaming. She never questions whom she saw, though everyone she tells does not believe her.

Perhaps she simply knows deep down what is right. She has nothing to hide, she has confessed her sins. She can see clearly.



RESPOND

MARY MAGDALENE

look

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Sit still in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form. Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Now engage your imagination. What story do you give to the figure?

reflect

- The oldest manuscripts of Mark's gospel ended with the women seized by fear in verse 8. The shorter and longer endings of the chapter were appended at a later date. What if the story of resurrection ended with verse 8? How would that change what we know about Christ's resurrection?
- The gospels name Mary Magdalene over a dozen times, she helped fund Jesus' ministry (see Luke 8: 2-3), she had demons cast out of her, and she was the first person to witness the resurrected Christ. Why do you think Mary Magdalene was such a prominent figure? What do you imagine her relationship to Christ was like?
- Name a situation in the present or past where someone proclaimed a message that was widely disbelieved. How do we believe those who seem unbelievable?



Dive In | Lauren Wright Pittman



FACES OF OUR FAITH

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

read ACTS 8:26-40

from the artist | LAUREN WRIGHT PITTMAN

I struggle with this image I created. I think I struggle because compositionally the image doesn't seem to have a focal point. The more I look at the image, however, I realize that what I was most drawn to in this text was the water. The focus ended up being the background of swirly, energetic waves of water.

In this text we meet a eunuch who is a court official of the Queen of Ethiopia. I imagine the eunuch is surrounded by opulence in the comforts of his chariot, but within this space he is wrestling and confused. His eyes wander through the theological quandaries of Isaiah—the prophecy, the metaphor, the language, the words, the letters, the punctuation—and he invites Philip to join him in this questioning space. What does it all mean? He asks Philip questions and Philip answers them, but the point of clarity comes when the landscape shifts. Instantly, the eunuch moves from questioning to a sense of awe, excitement, wonder, and maybe even a bit of certainty. “Look there is water! What is to keep me from being baptized?” (Acts 8:37). The answer is nothing—not his status, not his questioning, not even his position in society as a sexual minority. Absolutely nothing keeps him from the water, and it seems as though he knows this truth deep into the very cells of his existence. Nothing holds him back from baptism. Courageously diving headfirst into a wonderfully mysterious and certainly uncertain life of following Christ, the eunuch emerges from the water drenched in the truth that nothing will keep him from the love of God.



RESPOND

THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH

look

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Sit still in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form. Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Now engage your imagination. If you were to place yourself in this scene, where would you be and how would you interact with what surrounds you?

reflect

- Due to the Jewish mandate in Duet. 23:1, the eunuch may have been prohibited from worshiping at the temple in Jerusalem, and yet, he returns home studying Isaiah. Why do you think he remains eager and curious to learn more? What led him to travel all the way to Jerusalem in the first place?
- The eunuch, as the first gentile convert in Acts, was a sexual minority and a different race, ethnicity, and nationality. What does this signify about who we are to welcome and include in our communities today? What does authentic inclusion look like?
- Consider your church or worshiping community. Who is being excluded, intentionally or unintentionally? What changes could you make to extend welcome?



Lydia of Acts | Lisle Gwynn Garrity



FACES OF OUR FAITH

LYDIA

read ACTS 16:11-15, 40

from the artist | LISLE GWYNN GARRITY

As the reach of the apostles expands, Paul, Silas, Timothy, and their companions make their way through Asia Minor to Europe, stopping briefly in Philippi, part of modern-day Greece. Since there may not have been an established synagogue in Philippi, on the Sabbath they find a prayer-house on the river, a space filled not with men and high priests, but women. They join them and as Paul speaks, one woman in particular—Lydia of Thyatira, a Gentile devoted to Jewish worship, a dealer of purple cloth—listens intently, her heart expanding with every word.

Despite her outsider status (Thyatira was part of Asia Minor) and how women are typically portrayed in scripture, Lydia is a woman of power, influence, and dignity. Purple dye was a luxury item for the elite, so we are to assume that Lydia is an established businesswoman. She is also, surprisingly, the leader of her household. After being stirred by Paul's message, she and "her household" are baptized. No patriarch is named—no man gets credit or gives permission. Lydia's first act as a new disciple is hospitality. She welcomes the apostles into her home (without the permission of a patriarch). Later, after Paul and Silas are released from prison, her large home becomes the meeting place for the apostles and the growing Christian community in Philippi.

As the only Philippian convert named in Acts, Lydia was quite possibly the leader and patron of the Philippian church. She used her wealth to establish the community, she risked her reputation as a businesswoman to house foreigners released from prison, she sanctified her conversion with acts of radical hospitality. In this image, I wanted her eyes to be the focal point. I hope they draw you in, radiating her warmth.



RESPOND

LYDIA

look

Take a few moments to gaze upon the artwork. Sit still in quiet meditation as you observe the visual qualities of what you see: color, line, texture, movement, shape, form. Now take a deeper look. What parts of the image are your eyes most drawn to? What parts of the image did you overlook? Now engage your imagination. What story do you give to the figure?

reflect

- Imagine Lydia's backstory. Why did she move to Philippi from Thyatira? Was she married or divorced or widowed? How did she become a dealer of purple cloth?
- As a Gentile, Lydia sympathized with Jewish worship, but was not yet a full convert until she met Paul. Why do you think God opened her heart to Paul's message? Based on what you know about her, what gifts did she bring to ministry?
- Reflect on a time when you have received someone's hospitality. What are some ways we can implement radical hospitality in our churches?

CATCH
them
— WHEN THEY —
FALL

When they Fall | Sarah Are



FACES OF OUR FAITH

EUTYCHUS

read ACTS 20:1-12

from the artist | SARAH ARE

Once upon a time, there was a pastor who preached so long that a young man fell asleep, then fell out the window of the church, and died. It sounds like a bad joke, right? It's not. Read Acts 20.

It's a tragic story, but fortunately for Eutychus, Paul ran down to the street, knelt over his broken body, and revived the young man, bringing him back to life and back into the fold of the church.

Eutychus is a passive character in this story. However, his story is not unique because Eutychus is certainly not the only young person or individual who has fallen out of the church since the time Jesus walked this earth.

How many people are falling away from church, and when they do, are we kneeling in the street with them when things get hard? Are we carrying them back into the house to feed them and celebrate their life? Are we acknowledging how hard religion can be? Are we changing our traditions so that people with different mental and physical needs can connect to God?

When members get divorced, do we ignore it, or do we kneel in the street and cry with them? When our young people come out, do we celebrate them, or do we leave them sitting on the window sill alone, hoping they'll find God without us? When young adults say they can make a bigger impact in this world working for a non-profit rather than going to church, do we invite them to preach, or do we lull them to sleep, hoping they'll remain quiet?

May this story of Eutychus' valuable life remind us that people do fall, and when they do, we as a church are called to either catch them or fall with them.



RESPOND

EUTYCHUS

look

Color in the imagery on the page, reflecting on who among you may be falling.

reflect

- Imagine you are one of the people listening to Paul preach. How do you react to the events that unfold? What are you feeling as you witness Eutychus' fall?
- Now imagine you are Eutychus. How do you experience the events that unfold? How does this experience color your relationship with the Church?
- What are some of the reasons why people fall away from the Church? What actions or inactions by church members can drive people away?

... I AM ...
sending

HIM

WHO
IS MY
VERY

HEART
BACK TO YOU ♡

PHILEMON 1:12

My Very Heart | Sarah Are



FACES OF OUR FAITH

PHILEMON

read PHILEMON 1

from the artist | SARAH ARE

“I am sending him, who is my very heart, back to you”
(Philemon 1:12).

These are strong words to describe another—words saturated in love and hope, words saturated in connection and promise.

Paul writes these words to Philemon, a “dear friend and co-worker,” about Philemon’s runaway slave, Onesimus. In ancient Israel, almost anyone could become a slave, and nearly 30-40% of the population were enslaved. Slaves were treated poorly, like property, and could be killed for running away. However, somewhere along the way, Paul meets Onesimus, Philemon’s runaway slave, and chooses not to view him by his status alone, or as a criminal for running away, but as a son.

Paul pushes and challenges his readers to see the full humanity of Onesimus. Paul does not do this perfectly, still blinded by the societal structures of the day, but he does take big steps toward justice here—steps toward equality and love—and we are called to do the same.

In what ways are we being like Philemon—ignoring social change we could help enact? In what ways could we be like Paul, bending, step-by-step, the social arc of our society toward equality and justice for all? In what ways could we do better?

I am starting to believe that Paul was onto something—that maybe all justice work must begin by believing that others carry our hearts.



RESPOND

PHILEMON

look

Color in the imagery on the page, reflecting on the words, "I am sending him, who is my very heart, back to you" (Philemon 1:12).

reflect

- Read through Paul's letter once again, noting each time he expresses an ethic of love above law. What does it look like to live out an ethic of love above law in your own life?
- In the Roman Empire, to accept a runaway or delinquent slave back home without punishment was nothing short of absurd. To accept him back as a "beloved brother" would have provoked a significant amount of social sacrifice and shame. What does Paul risk by sending this request?
- Imagine Paul's letter is addressed to the modern day church. Who are the Onesimus's in our midst? Who are the ones deemed "useless," or delinquent who need to be welcomed into the beloved community?



 *Sanctified Art*



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