



## TIME OF GRACE®

# ME on Team Jesus?: Even If I'm Broken?

## Study Notes

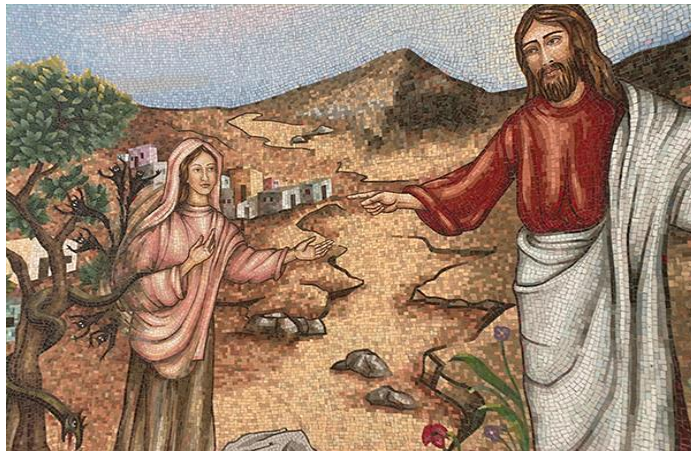
### Summary

What if you feel too broken with too much baggage? Can you still be saved? Pastor Mike walks us through the account of one of Jesus' closest female friends and shows us that no matter our stories, our struggles, or our secrets, it doesn't matter how broken we might be—because the broken belong with Jesus.

The Question: How \_\_\_\_\_ will you \_\_\_\_\_?

Our Answer: Most people stay \_\_\_\_\_ or stay \_\_\_\_\_.

- **Luke 8:1** — After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him,
- **Luke 8:2-3** — <sup>2</sup> and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; <sup>3</sup> Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.
- **Luke 8:2** — <sup>2</sup> and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out;



God's Answer: The \_\_\_\_\_ belong with Jesus.

Next step: Let's say our \_\_\_\_\_, belong God has \_\_\_\_\_.

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Pray for the courage to be honest in sharing your highs and lows with the fellow Christians that you do life with.
2. Read Hebrews 10: 19-25. What phrases/verses give you the courage to be honest in your Christian life? Think specifically of all the blessings for broken people in this passage.
3. Reflect on Luke 8:3, considering how the early church was launched, in part, by the generosity of these women of faith. What would it look like to imitate their example today?

### *Homework for Next Week*

Read Revelation 2: 12-17

Time of Grace Ministry  
**ME on Team Jesus? Even if I'm Broken?**  
Luke 8:1-3  
February 26, 2023

*Pastor Mike Novotny*

If you would ask me, what my favorite thing is about this church? It would take me a little bit to come up with an answer. I love being a Pastor here. I love this church. I love what God is doing at this place, at this time, but I think one of the things that I would talk about the most is what you see in this picture. It's a group. My life group. The people that I get to do life with week after week, after week. The people who gather around God's word, talk about the highs and the lows. It's not just the amazing personalities and the amazing food that we eat. I gain about 3.2 pounds every single Monday night. I love it, love it, love it when God's word is at the center and people are honest with each other. Right now, I'm not sure if you've ever joined a life group before or if you've ever had a close Christian friendship like this where you actually talk about God and faith, not just the weather and football. You're talking about spiritual things and you're actually doing life with other people. You're talking about the highs, you're talking about the lows, you're talking about the successes, you're talking about the sins, you're opening up, you're confessing, you're encouraging, you're giving advice, you're praying, you're forgiving in Jesus' name.

Have you had this experience yet? Bible in the middle, people gathered around it. I've seen such beautiful things happen in my Christian life in situations like that. To be honest, it took me about 30 years of being a Christian to experience it. Like some of you, what I used to do is come to church every Sunday, prayed before I went to bed, and then repeat the next week. But ever since I've experienced the power of group, actually doing life with other people like the Bible really wants us to do, I can guarantee you, I'm not going back until the day that I die. I will spend the rest of my life confessing, being forgiving, offering Jesus, encouraging, praying, bearing burdens. Once you experience Christian community like God intends, there is no other option. There's nothing quite as good. It's what I love, love, love about the culture of this church. But there's this question that I think every person who's been in a situation like that asks themselves. I don't think I've ever actually heard someone ask this question out loud, but I've sensed in my own heart and in many hearts in the room, people are thinking this question all the time. And I bet if you have a Christian friendship like that or you've been part of a Bible study at your church you've asked yourself this question too. People are talking about the sins, the struggles, the successes, the victories. They're talking about the spiritual highs and the spiritual lows.

And if you're taking notes here's the question that we always ask ourselves. The question is, how low... will you go? We're talking about life, and my life has had some highs and lows, and some really, really, high highs and some really, really low lows. When you're in the room and people are opening up, how low will you go? When a Christian friend asks, "How you doing? How's your family been? How's your soul doing these days?" Everyone instinctively asks themselves

that question, "How honest am I about to be right now? How transparent am I going to get? How safe will I play this conversation? How low will I go?" Here's why this has attention. I think all of us deep down, we know that Jesus was right. Jesus once said, "The truth will set you free." When you're not hiding, when you're not playing it safe, when you're like, hey, this is where I've been. It's not all good. It's messy, it's somewhat broken, but this is me. And people respond with love, and acceptance, and forgiveness. There is nothing quite like being fully known and fully loved. I think we ache for that. We don't like keeping secrets because secrets keep us sick.

But at the same time, all of us know that not all sins and struggles are exactly the same. Occasionally, people will say that, right? Sin is sin. And in a way I get that. Like, all sin is bad in the Bible. All sin needs to be forgiven and is forgiven because of Jesus. But I think you and I know that socially not all sin is the same. There're some sins that if I confess them right now while the cameras are running, while the microphone is on, you would smile and giggle and laugh and say, "Ah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Sometimes I drive too fast too." But there are other things that if I said them, it would get pin-drop quiet in the room. There's some stuff that's not as socially as acceptable in the church. There are some things that are just messy, and dirty, and kind of scary.

And so, the question is, if you've been there, if you've done that, then say that because what will people say back? Can you think of the kind of sins and struggles that end up in that category that -- they're like in this group of things you might be afraid to say? I came up with my list, let's see if you agree with me. I think anything that has to do with a sexual struggle is something that people don't like to talk about. Right? If it's lusting, if it's pornography, if it's prostitution, if it's infidelity, if it's adultery, if it's sexual orientation, if you feel trapped in the wrong body, anything with sex and gender can be very scary to talk about in the church. I think addiction is there too. Having one beer too many on a Friday night, okay. Yeah, I've been there. But if you confess that you've been drinking every night, that you burn bridges, that you lost the chip that was in your pocket, that you get high, that you bought drugs last Thursday. Like, that's kind of a different category.

If you're struggling in relationships, if you've been divorced twice or maybe just once, if your marriage fell apart because of some bad habits, some bitterness. If your marriage is falling apart, if you two argued all the way to the Bible study. Well, that's stuff to talk about. If you've been through abuse, if you've had an abortion, if you did jail time in your 20's, if you cut yourself, if you're so anxious you skip church, so depressed you think very dark thoughts, that's stuff to talk about. Maybe the reason you're so successful at work is because you don't really know how to do marriage, or parenting, and it's just easier when it's authority, when you're the boss and you don't have to get messy with real relationships. You know, I don't know if my list is right or complete, you could probably add or subtract some things from there. But I bet there're a whole bunch of things that you've been through that you haven't said just yet. At least, not here. At least not to that text thread of Christian friends that you have in your life.

And so, there's this huge tension, is there not? The stuff we need the most help with, we need prayer to get through, we need advice, and wisdom, and grace. Like, not just, pray for me I drive too fast. No, the stuff I need you for I'm not sure if I want to tell you about.

Here's my experience in the Christian church. It's our next fill in the blank. Our answer as Church people, as Christian people, tends to be this, that most people stay distant, or they stay quiet. Right? Some of you have stayed distant from relationships like this. You don't let anyone too close. You keep up your walls. You come to church, you believe in Jesus, you read your Bible, but you keep it between you and God. You stay away from life groups and honest conversation. You're not going to go there. You don't want people to see that part of you. Or maybe you do show up, but you stay quiet, right? You keep it safe. You try to act like, oh, I wonder what I struggled with this week, give me a second. But you know, that's why you stay quiet.

So, here's my big question for today. What are we going to do about that? I mean, a year from now, where will you be spiritually? I know this, the stuff you keep to yourself rarely changes, doesn't get better. A year from now, where do you want to be? And what would -- what would happen the next time you're in that conversation with a friend, or around the table in the group. What would happen if you actually said it? What would they say back? What will they think?

Whew! That's the big elephant I want to wrestle with today. And I'm so grateful because this book, the Bible, gives me an insane amount of help. One of the reasons I love the gospel of Luke is not just because it tells us the amazing things that Jesus said and did. The reason in particular I love the gospel of Luke which we've been studying in this series, is that Luke is so intentional about telling us about the lowest of lows, the most broken of broken, the most sinful of sinful. He doesn't just say, "And there were some sinners that Jesus once met. And he kind of helped them one time." No, Luke is the one who tells the story of The Prodigal Son, who wasted his father's wealth on prostitutes. He's the only one who tells the story of this woman who was notorious for being a sexual sinner in her community. He's the only one who tells the story of Zacchaeus, who loved money so much he burned every bridge and was hated. Luke loves to get specific with the lowest of lows so that you and I don't have to wonder if we belong in the Christian church. But the story we're about to study today is maybe the best of all.

So, let's open our Bible's today to Luke 8. We're going to kick things off right at the top of the chapter in verse 1. "After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him." So, here's Jesus doing what Jesus does. He's on this preaching tour town to town, village to village, and what is he talking about? The good news of the Kingdom of God. Now, if you didn't have something to do later today, I would talk to you for two hours about the kingdom of God. It was Jesus' favorite thing to talk about in the Bible, essentially, picture the Kingdom like this little castle, and getting into the kingdom of God. Jesus is the King, he has the authority, he gets to make the rules, but he sets up these really beautiful walls that keep you safe from all the dangerous things outside. Your sin, your past, your present, your struggles, your shame, your guilt, death, hell, Satan, demons. Get inside the Kingdom of God and you are safe from all of that. Authority plus safety, that's the Kingdom of God. That's a sermon for another day.

It says here however, "Jesus was preaching, the twelve were with him." That's a reference to the twelve apostles, right? So, Peter, and James, and John, Matthew, Thomas, all the rest of the guys.

You can picture Jesus; he's walking from village to village. He goes to a restaurant and says, "Table for 13." You know, Jesus and the twelve dudes behind him. That's what you might think, but that's not the whole story. Let's keep reading. It says, "The twelve were with him and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Mary called Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household, Susana and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means." My favorite little snippet from this verse is, "The women were helping to support them." Who's the, "Them?" The Apostles. In other words, Peter's preaching, but he needs Mary and Joanna's money. They're successful, they're generous, they love Jesus, they want the good news of the kingdom to spread. So, these successful, wealthy women are helping to support the ministry of the apostles. What a thought in a first century world. Jesus loved men and women, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters in the kingdom of God. I wish I had two hours to talk about that, but I don't. Because I want to spend the rest of my time talking to you about the part that I skipped. He said, "The twelve are with Jesus and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Mary called Magdalene from whom seven demons had come out." Seven demons?

Luke doesn't give all the ugly details of what these demons did, but we can say this for sure, her life was about as close to hell on Earth as one could get, until Jesus. I love the line. It said, "Mary called Magdalene from whom seven demons had come out." Seven demons, one Jesus. Guess who wins? Here's Jesus and here's Mary, and he points his authoritative finger as the king of the kingdom of God, and do you see what's happening to her? Let me show you a second picture, we'll zoom in a little bit. What's coming out of Mary's back, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven demons come out of her. Why did Luke put that in there? Why didn't he just say, "Then there was this woman named Mary who had some stuff and then she was with Jesus." Why didn't he just say, "She didn't have a perfect life, but -- No. Why does he specifically tell us, "Seven demons came out of her?" Here's why. Because the Bible wants to get to the bottom. The Bible wants to get as low as people can go. The Bible wants to tell you and me stories of people who aren't just imperfect, but people who are bad. People who had it bad. People whose lives were broken. Mary who is frankly scary. But it wasn't too much for Jesus.

Here's the big idea I want you to take away from this text, write this down please. This story from Luke 8 teaches us that the broken belong with Jesus. Now, for us as a church culture, this matters so much. Because this can go in two ways. Let me say this, some churches, some Christian communities are generic when it comes to sin and some communities are specific when it comes to sin. Do you know what happens in a Christian church if it's always generic? "Yeah, we're all sinners. I'm a sinner, you're a sinner. No one's perfect, we're all human."

Do you know what happens to individual people when that's the kind of the atmosphere? I think you do because it's the same thing that happens when you're on social media for too long. Alright, we're scrolling through TikTok, or Instagram, or Facebook, what happens to you? I think I know, right, you know your own lows and you see everyone else's highs. Like, "Oh, look at her, she lost 12 pounds, yay. Oh, look at that, he got her flowers again. Isn't that great for them? Oh, Cancun, that looks awesome." Right? And you're seeing maybe the highs and, you know, maybe someone's like, "Oh, my life is a mess." And they kind of keep it generic. But when you know your own specifics -- No one has to exactly say that you're worse or that you



don't belong, or that you should be ashamed. It just happens naturally. We know too much about ourselves that if it's only general we just come to these same conclusions. And so, guess what happens in a church where we do the same thing. We say our confession, we admit we're not perfect. Yep, we have to be saved by the cross of Jesus, but we never get scary like Mary. We never get specific with our sin. It's that the people in the room know the specifics of their sin. And they kind of wonder like, "Do I really belong in a place like this? Is there really forgiveness for a sin like mine?"

That's why today, friends, I want to encourage you to do the best and the scariest thing that can happen in the church. Say it. Just say it. If you're taking notes, here's how I'll put it today. "Let's say our scary." The scary thing to say, the embarrassing thing to say. I don't want to say this -- thing to say -- I'm sweating right now because it's almost my turn to talk kind of thing. When that moment comes seven demons will try to shut you up but say it. Tiny, tiny, asterisk. I know enough about trauma and about abuse that -- Just like, saying it everywhere you go isn't always healthy. So, if that's your story; you're loved and you're welcome, but I don't want to push you into a situation that would just be unhealthy emotionally, or mentally for you. So, maybe, maybe there's time you don't say it. But I think 97% of the time when we struggle with sins, the church is the perfect place to just say it.

You can blame me if you want to. "Listen, guys, I don't want to say this, but, you know, Pastor Mike said I had to, so." Or, "I so don't want to tell you guys about this, but for the last month I haven't mentioned --". Or, "What we say in here is confidential, right? Because I really need to tell you that -- It's super embarrassing and I've never told anyone this, but..." Because you know what will happen when you do. I've been trying to live transparently for about a decade of my Christian life. Do you know what happens in the room when people do that? Breakthrough, blessing, community, right? Someone in the room is bound to say, "Me too. I've been there." Connections happen in a single confession that wouldn't happen in ten years of sitting next to each other in church. Doors open for forgiveness and grace. "You're depressed, you're anxious, you've cut yourself, you're addicted, you drink too much, you look at pornography, your marriage is barely hanging on. I get it. And I'm so glad you said it. Thanks for your courage. You know God loves you, right?" As a Christian church, this is what we get to do. What would the world who doesn't know Jesus say about confessions like that? "Sorry you messed up? Try harder next time?" No, but you and I as followers of Jesus get to say, "God has mercy."

It's the last thing I want you to write down. Let's say our scary because God has mercy. Let's say to one another as fellow Christians, "But Jesus forgives that." But let's repeat the things the Bible says, that if Matthew, and Peter, and Mary could be next to Jesus, you still are too. I'm sorry it happened, I'm sorry it's messy, and I wish we could change it. But please know this, that God is love and his love is even for this. We always wonder deep down in our hearts, but once we say it the church can be the church. Let's say our scary because God has mercy. Our Savior Jesus is a great king. He drives out minivans full of demons. He rescues real sinners. His grace gets all the way to the bottom. Let's say what's scary so that God can have mercy.

So, brothers and sisters, the ball is in your court. One day from now I will be gathered around the table with my friends from life group. We read the Bible and it will be my turn and your turn,

and your turn, and your turn. What are we going to say? I don't know enough about you all, you love Jesus, you love me and I love you. Let's just say it. So, our moment is coming. Let's come to Jesus with the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. He can handle it and his people can too. Let's be a church that is filled with broken people who still belong and always will because of the mercy of our Savior. Let's pray.

God, my life is different because of this. There are sins that I have kept secret for so long that never changed no matter how much I prayed because I didn't do this. And God I've seen the power of your spirit when we get to the other side of this. I've seen how amazing your people are to support, and encourage, and help me when I need it the most.

God, I have been blessed by this kind of Christian community and so I pray that you would persuade people's hearts to join me. God you've gathered people at this church who've been through all of it. There's no sin we haven't committed, there's no struggle we haven't been through. And I know the Devil wants to make us think otherwise, that we're the only ones, that people would be shocked, and they'd run away, but that's not true.

So, God I pray that this would be a church that is all about the truth. The truth, yes, of what we've done, but even more the truth of what you've done for us through your son, Jesus Christ. Thank you, that in the kingdom of God there is absolute safety. There's no sin, no struggle, no Devil, no demon, there is no shame, there is no hell for your people because Jesus lived, and died, and rose for all of us.

So, God when that moment comes may your spirit give us courage. Maybe we find our confidence in you. And may we as your people respond with those beautiful words, I forgive you. Jesus forgives you. Your God loves you, right? We pray to become that kind of church. For your glory and the good of your people. We ask it all in Jesus' name. And God's people joined their voices and they said, "Amen."