

A 7-WEEK BIBLE
STUDY EXPERIENCE

Moms *on the Way*

FOLLOWING JESUS THROUGH *the*
CHALLENGES *of* MOTHERHOOD



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Contents

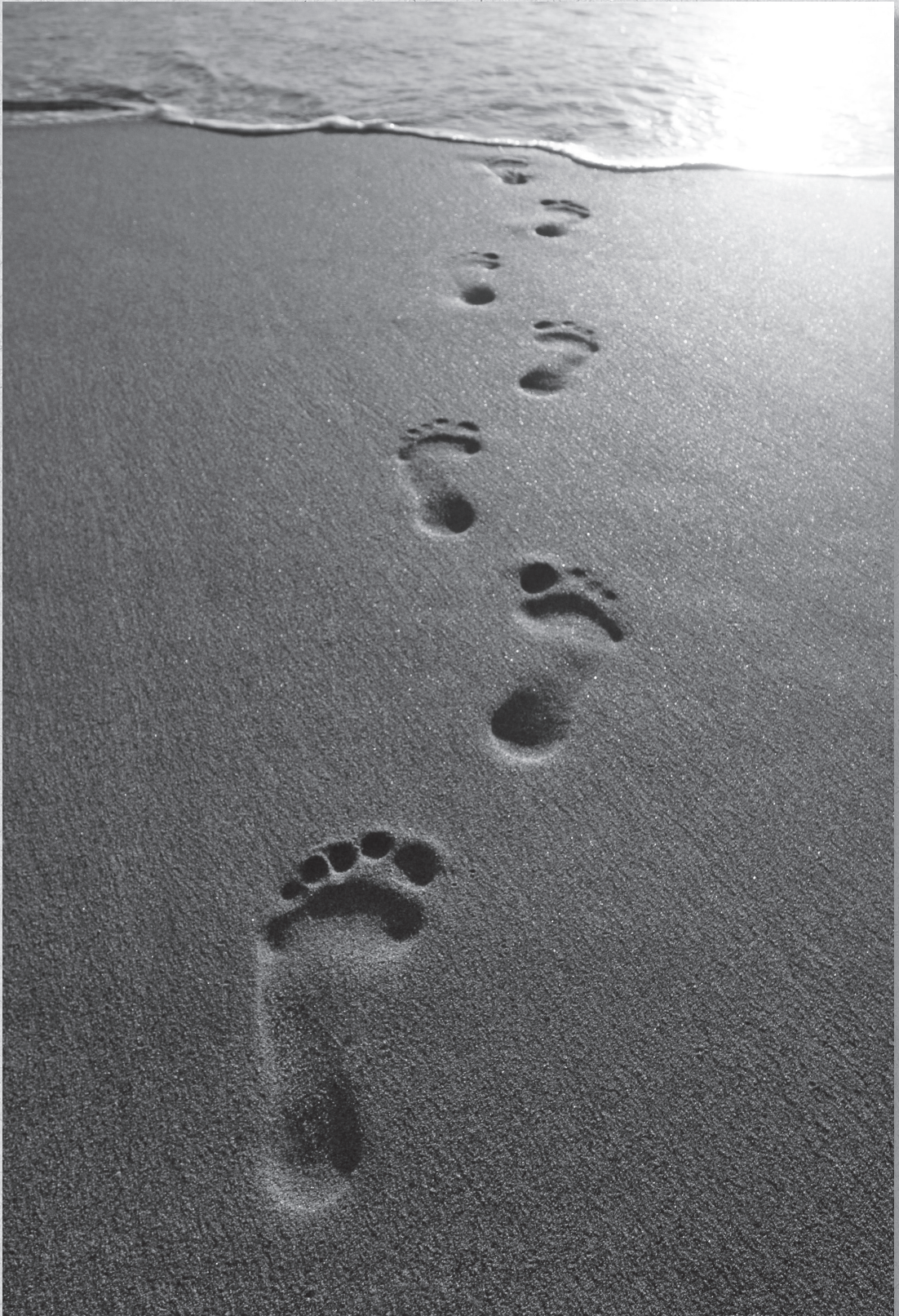


INTRODUCTION: Moms on the Way

WEEK 1	When We Need a Friend	7
WEEK 2	When We Feel Ashamed	33
WEEK 3	When We Feel Resentful	59
WEEK 4	When We're Living in The Land of Not Enough	83
WEEK 5	When We're Caught Up in the Rat Race	105
WEEK 6	When God Invites Us to Embrace Vulnerability	127
WEEK 7	When All We Can Taste Is Bitterness	149

NOTES





WEEK 1

When We Need a Friend

GROUP BIBLE STUDY

INTRODUCTION TO WEEK 1

Have someone read the following aloud:

We all need a friend.

Jesus is the best friend we'll ever know. But God also wired us for human friendship. Because sometimes you need someone with an extra car seat, a granola bar, and expensive tissue—the kind that doesn't shred when you cry.

In other words, we need mom friends. The ones who text “I'm outside” and hand us a latte when we've been up all night with a colicky baby. The ones who don't blink when we admit we lost it on our kid in the checkout line, again. The ones who cheer like it's the Olympics when our toddler poops on the potty, grieve when our tween is bullied, and listen to our disaster-at-the-airport story—for the forty-seventh time—and then say, “Tell it again; you left out the part about the yogurt.”

These are the friends who say, “You're not crazy. I see you. I've been there.”

And yet, so many of us don't have a friend like that. In our survey, 69 percent of moms said they were lonely or didn't have life-giving friendships. If that's you, our prayer is that through this study, God will bring you at least one true friend.

This week, we see a glimpse of friendship in action. Mary and her son Jesus show up at a wedding where the unthinkable happens: The hosts run out of wine.

In ancient Jewish culture, this isn't just awkward, it's an epic hospitality failure. Weddings were multi-day village affairs hosted by the groom's parents, and wine was the ultimate symbol of abundance. Running out was public shame on a platter.

John doesn't name the groom's parents, but they're likely there, overwhelmed and humiliated. We don't know Mary's connection to the family, but there are clues: She's there with Jesus and her other sons, which suggests they're related. And when things fall apart, Mary doesn't just notice, she acts.

To help us connect with the story, we've given the groom's mom a name, Yedida, which means “beloved friend” in Hebrew.



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Like all of us, Yedida really needs a friend.

Thankfully, she has two—Mary and Jesus—who show up right when she needs them most.

OPENING ACTIVITIES

1. Get to know one another
 - Share your name and the names and ages of your children.
 - Why are you joining this study?

2. Agree on group commitments

Following Jesus with other moms can be a joy-filled adventure when we love, support, bless, and cheer each other on. Sadly, it can be soul crushing when we fake it, judge each other, or quietly leave someone out. To help form and sustain a life-giving group, we have some suggested commitments below. Decide together which to keep, tweak, or add.

3. Going a little deeper

- Share a hosting failure you’ve experienced—what did you run out of?

Group Commitments

1. Listen actively without giving advice.
2. Let folks finish their thoughts without interrupting.
3. Take wise risks to share the vulnerable truth about your life.
4. Be mindful of how much space you take up in the group (if you’re a talker, listen more; if you’re a listener, talk a little more).
5. Have a learning posture.
6. Be open to what God has for you.
7. Keep confidentiality—what’s said in the group stays in the group.





VIDEO

WATCH the welcome video.

BIBLE STUDY

READ John 2:1-12 aloud.

1. Imagine yourself as Yedida, mother of the groom, in the middle of a gigantic hosting failure. List your thoughts and feelings, and what you fear others are whispering about you. We've filled in one thought and one fear to get you started.

TABLE 1.1. YEDIDA'S EXPERIENCES AS MOTHER OF THE GROOM

Yedida's thoughts and feelings	What she fears others are thinking and feeling about her or her family
It's ruined!	She really blew it. Is she a terrible planner or just stingy?



– The best wine and in overwhelming abundance (from six hundred to nine hundred bottles of wine)?

– Into wine at a wedding?

6. Look back through the entire passage to identify what each group does to receive the wine and how the miracle impacted them:

TABLE 1.2. RECEIVING THE WINE AND ITS IMPACT

	What did they do to receive the best wine?	How did the miracle impact them?
The hosts: Yedida and her husband		
Mary		
The servants and master of the banquet (who functions like a head butler)		
The bride, bridegroom, and guests		
The disciples		



When Mary intercedes on behalf of Yedida, she acts as an agent of shalom, protecting Yedida's dignity and promoting her flourishing.

7. How have you experienced similar acts of shalom?

– When have you had a friend intercede on your behalf like Mary did for Yedida?

– When have you done that for someone else?

8. How can this group be one that mirrors the sort of intercession and protection that Mary offers Yedida?

BREATH PRAYER

Take two minutes of silence to practice this breath prayer individually. Then share what, if anything, you experienced while praying. If you feel drawn to this prayer, you can practice it throughout the week.



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INHALE: *Jesus, I can't do this alone*

EXHALE: *I need a friend*

Breath Prayer

Breath prayer is a simple ancient practice that helps us pray throughout the day using our breath as a guide. We can use breath prayer as we walk, as we grocery shop, or during pauses at work. Breath prayer is great for busy moms—we simply breathe in a short phrase and breathe out another one.

HOLY SPIRIT CHECK-IN

Take two minutes of silence for the following:

- Tell the Holy Spirit about any sense of loneliness or isolation you experience and your desire for deep friendship.
- Listen to what the Holy Spirit says in response.

Briefly share what you experienced.

Holy Spirit Check-In

Your faith tradition may not emphasize experiences of the Holy Spirit, but Scripture tells us the Spirit comforts, guides, teaches, convicts, helps, and intercedes for us. The Holy Spirit even speaks to us (John 16:13–14)! The studies in this book invite you to experiment with listening to the Spirit, often through brief one- or two-minute exercises. You probably won't hear an audible voice, but you might receive a thought, a verse, or an image. You may be surprised by how much you can hear, sense, and feel—even in just a minute of quiet listening.



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LEADER BENEDICTION

Jesus, motherhood can feel so lonely. We long for good friends, friends who won't judge or shame us, friends who listen deeply and carry our needs to you in prayer. Teach us to grow in friendship with you, and help us nurture life-giving friendships with other moms.

Day 1

JESUS MEETS YEDIDA WHERE SHE IS

Each week's daily devotionals follow the five steps of spiritual transformation.

Day 1: God meets us where we are.

Day 2: God welcomes us into honest conversation.

Day 3: God calls us to trust and obey.

Day 4: God transforms us and sets us free.

Day 5: God invites us to be agents of shalom.

Yedida and her family have probably been planning this wedding for months. She has poured her time, money, and prayers into giving her son and his bride the perfect day.

OBSERVE *John 2:1-3. Fill in the chart below to compare what Yedida likely hoped for to what actually happened.*



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TABLE 1.3. YEDIDA'S HOPES AND HOW THE DAY TRANSPIRED

What Yedida hoped would happen	What actually happened
Nothing would prevent her son from marrying his beloved bride.	
Family and friends would join her in celebrating this momentous occasion.	
She would host an amazing party.	
Family and friends would think she was a great host who celebrated her son well.	

Every mom we know wants to give her kids the best of what she's got. So we sacrifice sleep, hot meals, and the sacred right to pee alone. We plan, prepare, pray, and pour ourselves out. But sooner or later, like Yedida, we run out. We run out of diapers, milk, money, and energy. And then we run out of patience, sanity, and hope. When that happens, the leftovers aren't pretty: a cocktail of shame, resentment, and bitterness.

Motherhood is hard enough, and running out makes it harder still. And if we're trying to muscle through it alone? Well, that's soul crushing.

And too often, we don't have the friends we need. Maybe we're far from the people we most want to share life with. Or we've been hurt by friends we trusted. Maybe we're the only single mom or working

mom on the block, and our attempts at friendship fall flat. Or our friends just don't understand what it's like to raise children of color, or children with disabilities, or children who are walking away from Jesus. Even when we *do* have amazing friends, our own sense of failure and shame can keep us from saying, "I've run out of wine."

REFLECT: *What "wine" are you most likely to run out of as a mother? Money, patience, time, creativity, hope, or something else?*

The good news for Yedida—and for us—is that when we've run out of wine, Jesus is already there. At Cana, Jesus starts as a guest but ends as the host. He meets Yedida in the middle of a hosting debacle and transforms her flop into a feast.

Jesus is always present, meeting us where we are. Before we even notice we've run out of wine, Jesus is there. Even when we can't see him, even when we quit looking, Jesus is right there with us.

This is where transformation begins: not when we finally get it together but when we realize Jesus is already with us. In the kitchen. At the office. In the minivan. He's there when the stomach flu hits and the laundry detergent runs out. He's there when depression strikes our teen and we don't know what to do. He's there when our toddler . . . won't . . . go . . . to . . . sleep.

And when we are lonely and longing for deeper friendships, Jesus looks us in the eye and says, "*I call you friend. Let me show you the way.*"



JESUS MEETS US WHERE WE ARE

If “wine” is what you need to flourish, how full is your cup today? Is it empty, half-full, or overflowing?

AN INVITATION: HOLY IMAGINATION— WHERE WAS JESUS?

Think of a time when your cup ran dry. Imagine yourself in the scene. Then invite Jesus—who promises to never leave or forsake us—to show you where he was and what he was doing. Write down what you see, hear, and experience.

JESUS WELCOMES YEDIDA AND MARY INTO HONEST CONVERSATION

When Yedida runs out of wine, she doesn’t share her problem with Jesus. Why would she? He hasn’t yet begun his ministry. To Yedida, he’s just another guest, the son of her good friend. But she does tell Mary. Not because Mary can solve her problem (she’s not about to whip up gallons of Merlot) but because Yedida needs a friend, a safe shoulder to cry on (or share her panic with), someone to help her carry her shame. What Yedida doesn’t know is that while Mary can’t solve her problem, she knows the one who can.

REFLECT: *Think of a time in your life when you or your children were in need and you were reluctant to ask for help? Why?*

Day 2



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As disaster looms, Mary doesn't panic or gossip. She doesn't say, "Not my problem." Instead, she goes straight to Jesus: *Hey, son. Yedida's in trouble. Can you do something?*

Jesus replies, "Woman, why do you involve me?"

Jesus' response may sound harsh to our ears, but as noted in the group study, *woman* is better translated as "ma'am." This isn't Jesus being disrespectful, and it isn't Mary being pushy. It's the kind of honest conversation they've been having his whole life.

OBSERVE *Luke 2:41-51: What three words would you use to describe the conversation Mary and Jesus had when he was twelve. What surprises you about it?*

Mary doesn't sound like a serene, haloed saint. And Jesus doesn't sound like a tween who is annoyed at Mary for "being in my business." He never criticizes Mary for overreacting or taking it personally. This is what honest conversation with Jesus looks like: strong emotion, questions flowing in both directions, and loving respect.

From the time Mary questions the angel announcing she will become pregnant with God's son—*How can this be?*—to her final exchange with Jesus at the cross, Mary's life is marked by raw honesty before God. She asks hard questions, voices her confusion, and treasures what she doesn't fully understand. And that long practice of honest conversation helps her model for Yedida what to do in a crisis. When the wine runs out, Mary knows exactly where to go, trusting the character and power of her son Jesus. And when Jesus seems reluctant, she's undeterred: "Do whatever he tells you."

Honest conversations with Jesus are *the* key to spiritual transformation. They can also feel terrifying. That's because honesty means facing the pain, exposing the shame, and showing our soft bellies. But when we stay silent with God, we cut ourselves off from experiencing



God's love and power. We can't build deep friendship with Jesus, or anyone, if we don't find ways to share truthfully.

When we mapped out the five steps of spiritual transformation, we thought step 3 (trusting and obeying) would be the hardest. But we've noticed over and over in Scripture, transformation stalls at step 2: honest conversation with God.

If it's scary to be honest with Jesus, who loves us perfectly, it can feel impossible to be honest with other moms. We fear being judged, pitied, or quietly written off as "that mom." But trusting a friend with our ugly truth allows her to see us—not the polished version we want to project but our true selves, longing to be known and loved. And when she hears our pain, she can carry our needs straight to Jesus, just as Mary did with Yedida.

GOD WELCOMES US INTO HONEST CONVERSATION

How honest are you with Jesus about what goes on in your life? Do you spill your guts in prayer, or do you keep it polite, like you're writing a thank-you note? What holds you back? What helps you open up?



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AN INVITATION: HAVE AN HONEST CONVERSATION WITH JESUS

Take one minute to tell Jesus about one thing you have a hard time talking about with God or others.

When you finish, take one deep breath in, hold it for a second, then exhale, “You hear me, Jesus.” Then take a minute to listen to anything he says in response. Write down what you hear.

Note: You may want to set a daily alarm on your phone to pause and check in with Jesus about whatever is happening at the moment. Your answer doesn’t have to be deep. It might be, “I feel out of control. I just broke up a fight over who touched whose sock, and I’m about to explode.” Or “I need your wisdom because I’m about to walk into a hard conversation at work.” Or even, “Yes! Frozen dumplings are on sale!” Then take a deep breath in, hold it, and exhale, “You hear me, Jesus.” Checking in like this often will build your ability to share anything and everything with Jesus.



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JESUS CALLS YEDIDA AND HER COMMUNITY TO TRUST AND OBEY

Day 3

When Yedida's banquet runs out of wine, she needs more than just Mary's shoulder to cry on; she needs a squad of people willing to say yes to Jesus' wild invitations.

OBSERVE *John 2:1-10. What are Jesus' specific instructions?*

The miracle starts with a wedding meltdown—a first-century “the flower girl threw up on her dress, and the cake just fell over” moment. But trusting and obeying Jesus in the middle of that chaos is actually quite simple, just a few small steps:

Small step 1: Yedida whispers to Mary, “We're out of wine.”

Small step 2: Mary has an honest conversation with Jesus.

Small step 3: The servants do exactly what Jesus says.

And then, bam! Jesus transforms water into the best wine at the banquet.

Jesus could have, of course, noticed the wine had run out and quietly fixed the problem himself. Instead, he invites Yedida's community to participate. The crisis may have started with one family, but the miracle unfolds as Yedida and her squad each take a small step of faith.

We call this *Small Steps-Big God Theology*: Jesus asks us to take small, doable steps of trust, and with each one, he shows up in big ways. Water becomes wine. Doubt becomes faith. Moms become disciples. Party disasters become memories we laugh about for years to come. Each small step strengthens us for the next one. Before long, we look back and realize we've traveled a joyful journey with Jesus!

Of course, even one tiny step with Jesus can feel impossible when we're already maxed out—everyone needs something, and everything



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we own is sticky. But this is how God works: Even when God asks people to do enormous things, the path is broken down into small steps, rarely taken alone, with God doing all the heavy lifting. The small step may not be easy—it may take great courage, and some time—but when God asks us to take it, God resources us with the time, the people, and the power of the Holy Spirit to follow God’s way. This is how Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt in Exodus. With Aaron and Miriam, he helped the whole community follow God step by step: *Paint blood on your doors, bake unleavened bread, pack your bags, follow the cloud.* But Moses didn’t part the sea; that was God. Small steps. Big God.

Small Steps-Big God Theology

When God asks people to do enormous things, the path is broken down into small steps, rarely taken alone, with God doing all the heavy lifting.

REFLECT: *As a mom, how do you respond to Small Steps-Big God Theology, that the call to trust and obey looks like small steps of faithfulness?*

SMALL STEPS-BIG GOD SUMMARY

For moms, small steps might look a lot like Yedida and Mary’s: Tell someone you are struggling. Pray for someone. Share your kid snacks with a frazzled mom at the park. Trusting and obeying Jesus isn’t about perfection. He’s leading us to an abundant banquet. Just take one step.



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GOD CALLS US TO TRUST AND OBEY

What's one small step of faith you have taken with Jesus in the past?
How did your small step lead to "new wine"?

AN INVITATION: TAKE A SMALL STEP WITH JESUS

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one small step you can take with Jesus today. Write down what you hear. Then either take that step, or plan when you will take it.

JESUS TRANSFORMS YEDIDA'S PARTY AND SETS HER FREE

John calls Jesus' first miracle a "sign." Transforming water into wine isn't a party trick; it's a preview of how Jesus intends to transform *everything*. And it starts with him resurrecting Yedida's dead party.



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Day 4

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