



Beauty Marks

BY TRACY GRINDLE

Opening Show and Tell

We all have scars. If you're comfortable sharing, show your group a physical scar you have and tell about it. If you prefer to share about an emotional scar, please do so.

Opening Prayer: Healing Savior, thank You for helping our scars mend. You are with us every step of the way, no matter how long it takes to recover. Guide our thoughts and draw us closer to You and each other. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Who comes to mind when you think of pain and scars, and then beautiful triumph? Jesus would be the perfect example. Who else from the Bible jumps into your thoughts?

Did anyone say Mephibosheth? No? Well, let's have a look. (Feel free to call him M; it's not easy to repeat that name!) Please read **2 Samuel 4:4**. What physical scars did Jonathan's young son have? _____

The emotional scars would have been substantial as well. His father and grandfather were killed at the same time, when the little guy was just five. It was common practice for the family of murdered leaders to also be killed. How terrifying for a young child to be escaping for his life and permanently disabled in the process.

What kind of life could he have had, in exile and without family? _____

We catch up with Mephibosheth in **2 Samuel 9:3–13**. David wanted to show kindness to someone from Saul's family, because he and Jonathan, Saul's son, had been like brothers. Had anyone been kind to the young man who spent his first years in the palace, then spent the rest of his life hiding in *Lo Debar*? _____

Lo Debar means "place of no pasture." This lost sheep was found by David, the shepherd king, honoring the covenant he had made years before with Jonathan. What did King David give to Mephibosheth? _____

Have you ever felt summoned by our King to leave a place of no pasture? Maybe it was a place of hopelessness, depression, shame, or fear. Sheep find rest, nourishment, and safety in the pasture with their shepherd — did you lack that in your *Lo Debar*? How have you felt God's grace during the journey out? _____

How did God's grace change your perspective? _____

See **John 10:9** for our Shepherd's promise to His sheep: We are invited to eat at the King's Table, and our future is redeemed too! Like Mephibosheth, we might not feel worthy. Remember, the invitation comes through God's Word where we read of the Lord's love, covenant, and promise; we are worthy because of His sacrifice. King David honored Mephibosheth like a son. Likewise, we inherit a share in the kingdom and a place at the table because our King chose to honor us as His daughters. Need proof? See **Isaiah 61:8b; John 3:16; John 15:16; and Ephesians 1:4-6** for starters.

Since we last read of Mephibosheth, King David had a lot of family drama, was betrayed by his son, left Jerusalem, and now returned triumphant. Let's read about his return in **2 Samuel 19:24-30**. Can you see a bit into Mephibosheth's heart?

He remained humble and grateful. His focus was solely on his king, and not what the king could do for him. King David had given him a new reality. When we change our focus, the Lord changes how we see our scars. God redeems that scar and it takes on meaning beyond what we can see. The Lord can bring great triumph through pain and scars. He can even turn them into grace-filled beauty marks!

Let's look now at Mary and Martha, the sisters with freshly scarred hearts at the death of their brother. A little while after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the sisters threw a party for Jesus. Please read **John 12:1-11**.

Martha was serving, as usual. Lazarus was at the table with Jesus. What was Mary doing?

The sisters were responding with joy to their Savior. Despite the testing of their faith and the uncertainty of their safety as supporters of Christ, their beauty-marked hearts showed through. Martha's servant heart and generous hospitality were gifts to those at the dinner. Mary saw with the eyes of her heart and gifted her Lord with expensive perfume. How much did that anointing cost her?

If you had a year's wage to spend on the Lord, what would you do?

Beyond the financial cost, the whole party heard their beloved Jesus say, "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." Oh, the heartbreak ... Jesus speaking of His death again. How could it be so soon? Wounded hearts and wonder-filled hearts followed this Christ, in search of hope, healing, redemption, resurrection, lasting peace, and true love. Just like us. Just like generations after us.

What are you hoping for in Christ? _____

Mary and Martha were courageous in faith and action. Despite their emotional scars, they focused solely on their King. They were living that moment with Christ, not fearful of the future. Each in her own way was powered by the Spirit to live for Christ. Do you know someone empowered by the Spirit who has triumphed through Christ and lives beyond her scars?

You probably know **Philippians 4:4** by heart. Your heart may even have wrestled with it. Perhaps Mary and Martha had learned to rejoice always. Rejoicing in the Lord keeps our hearts open and makes our connection with Him solid. How can rejoicing in the Lord help us heal?

Next to Jesus, Paul could be the epitome of scars being turned into victorious beauty marks. He felt unworthy, like Mephibosheth, and driven to serve, like Mary and Martha. Paul was fully surrendered to his King. We could read much of the New Testament to see examples of Paul receiving injuries and scars, physical, mental, and emotional. But he sums it up in his letter to the Corinthians.

Please read **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**. What did he delight in and why?

He accepted every challenge, trusting that the scars would be turned into something powerful. He focused unwaveringly on his Savior, and not on his limitations or hardships. What happens if we focus on our limitations? Or let fear limit our future?

We know the Lord will redeem our scars with His scars. Nothing is ever wasted when we pour it out at His holy feet. May our beauty marks bring Him glory!

Closing Prayer: Please ask a volunteer to read **Psalm 103:1-12**. Finish up with a "Thank You, Lord! Amen!"

Closing Hymn: Sing or say together verses 1,2,4 of "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds" (LSB #524; LW #279; TLH #364 1,2,5).

Tracy is church secretary and Care and Compassion Coordinator at Shepherd of the Desert in Scottsdale, Arizona. She loves her family and friends, and is humbled to be marked by Christ to share His Word.