



## INTRODUCTION

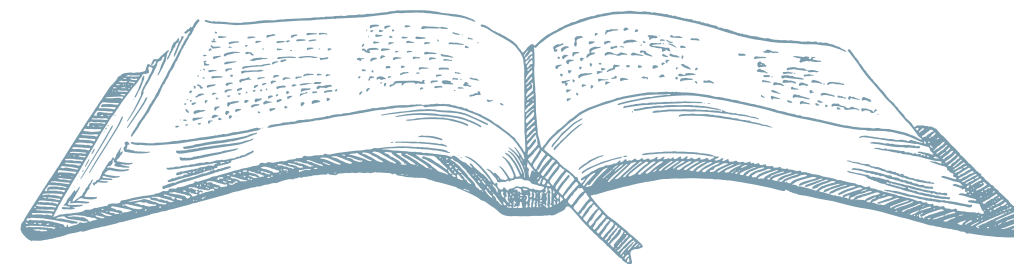
You are about to take a *Journey with Jesus* along *The Way of Suffering*. It is the most passionate and powerful path Jesus walked while here on Earth. And it took him along the streets of Jerusalem, through which he eventually carried the cross to a hill called Golgotha, where he was crucified.

The Bible says that when Jesus suffered, he trusted God to fulfill his promises—that God would use his death and resurrection to end the reign of sin and bring people into a new life of freedom and peace through Christ.

Over the years, writers and musicians and artists have created representations of Jesus' journey to the cross. And in light of that tradition, this book includes 15 mosaics created by artist Lance Jost to provide you with moments to pause for prayer and to express gratitude as you reflect on what Jesus did for you in his Crucifixion and Resurrection.

*“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”*

(1 Peter 2:24-25 NIV)



## THE WAY OF SUFFERING

The prophet Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would be a Suffering Servant who would carry the condemnation of sinners on his shoulders. And in doing that, he would save many people, leading them back to God. Isaiah said:

*“He was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.*

*He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. Unjustly condemned, he was led away. No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream. But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man’s grave.*

*But it was the LORD’s good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants. He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD’s good plan will prosper in his hands. When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins. I will give him the honors of a victorious soldier, because he exposed himself to death. He was counted among the rebels. He bore the sins of many and interceded for rebels.”*

**ISAIAH 53:5-12 (NLT)**



## THE FIRST STATION OF THE CROSS

**Mary Anoints Jesus with Oil**

*“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”*

**JOHN 12:3 (NIV)**



It was a few days before the Passover, and Jesus was reclined at a table eating a meal. He was the honored guest of Lazarus, a friend of Jesus who lived just a few miles from Jerusalem in Bethany, with his sisters, Mary and Martha.

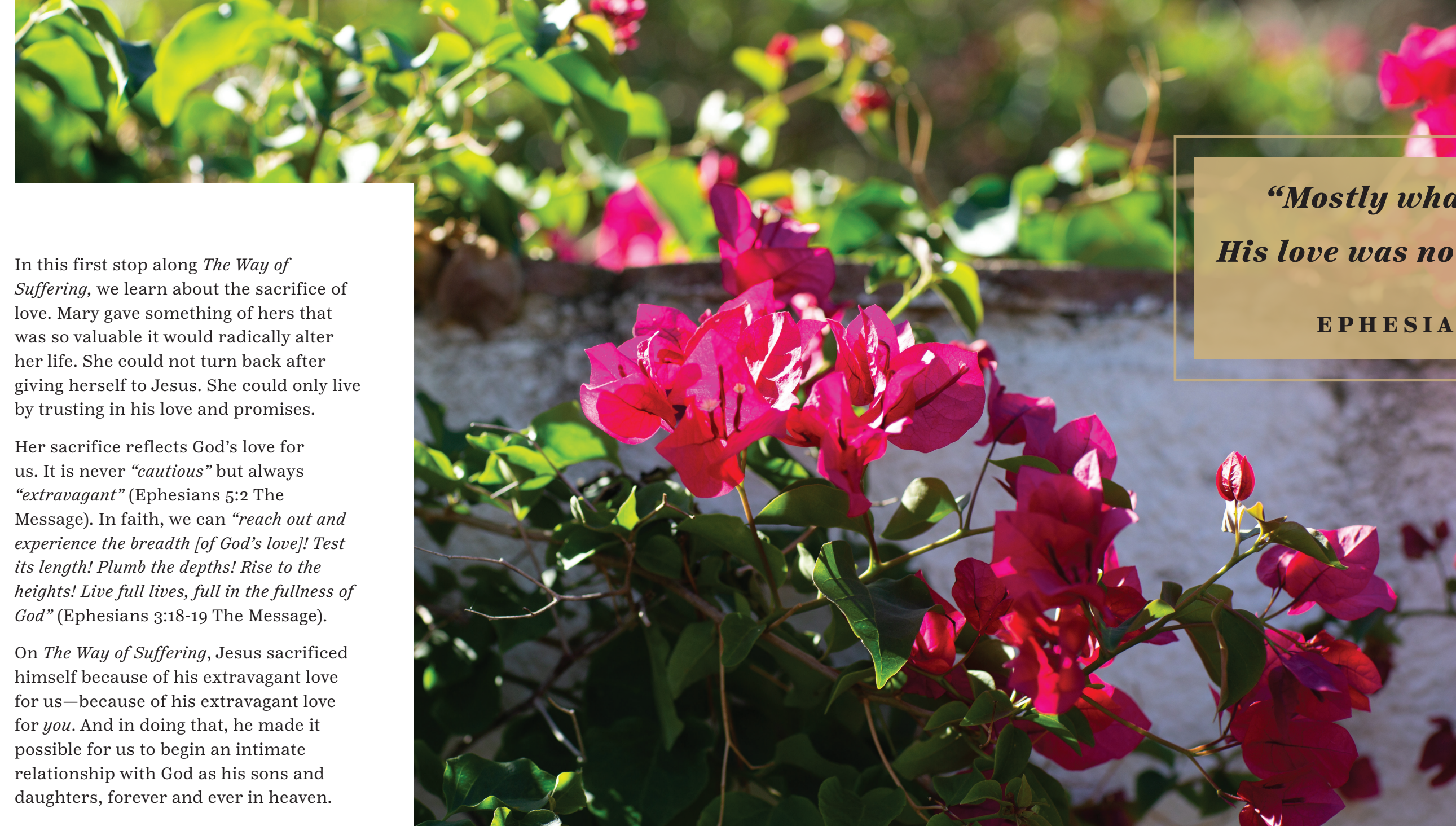
Lazarus was the man Jesus brought back from the dead. Can you imagine their conversation? The man who experienced resurrection was talking to Jesus who would soon experience Resurrection.

Suddenly, an explosion of fragrance filled the whole house. And there was Mary with a large bottle of precious oil—pure nard that was burned as incense in the temple. Since the time of Moses, it was used daily as an offering to God, and it was burned in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to request God’s mercy.

Mary poured this expensive oil onto the feet of Jesus. And then she began to wipe his feet with her hair, an uninhibited act of sacrifice and love. The oil was of such value that it could be used as Mary’s dowry when she married.

In fact, Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Jesus, complained that the oil could be sold to feed the poor. After all, it was worth more than most people make in a year.

But Jesus said to Judas, *“Leave her alone. She did this in preparation for my burial”* (John 12:7 NLT). Jesus was referring to the custom to anoint the dead with precious oils and perfumes. Then Jesus, foreshadowing that his death was near, said, in essence, that the poor would always be there and could be fed, but he wouldn’t be with them much longer.



***“Mostly what God does is love you . . .  
His love was not cautious but extravagant.”***

**EPHESIANS 5:2 (THE MESSAGE)**

In this first stop along *The Way of Suffering*, we learn about the sacrifice of love. Mary gave something of hers that was so valuable it would radically alter her life. She could not turn back after giving herself to Jesus. She could only live by trusting in his love and promises.

Her sacrifice reflects God’s love for us. It is never “cautious” but always “extravagant” (Ephesians 5:2 The Message). In faith, we can “reach out and experience the breadth [of God’s love]! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:18-19 The Message).

On *The Way of Suffering*, Jesus sacrificed himself because of his extravagant love for us—because of his extravagant love for *you*. And in doing that, he made it possible for us to begin an intimate relationship with God as his sons and daughters, forever and ever in heaven.