

Title: Is Grace Enough for Loss (Part #2)
Text: John 19:26-27, Luke 2:35

Introduction:

I never grew up with parents kneeling beside my bed praying with me. However, I knew enough from my Catholic upbringing to let my last words and thoughts of the day be focused on God. It wasn't long. Remember, I am an efficiency guy. I get to the point. Share a few needs, occasionally a feeling or two and then move on. One prayer that I remember praying for perhaps a decade during this time was this simple prayer, "Jesus, bring mommy and daddy back together." As many of you know, my parents divorced when I was ten. Though I never comfortable discussing what I thought and felt with many others around me, I do remember the sanctuary of prayer, the place to privately verbalize a few honest thoughts before God before I shut down for the day. No matter what happened that day, no matter where I found myself sleeping, no matter how tired I felt, I remember the fact I took a few moments to turn my eyes toward heaven and verbally confessing quietly my longing to see my mom and my dad come back together. "Jesus, bring mommy and daddy back together."

That prayer was never answered. Now I know some may think, "No" is an answer and you would be correct. But what I mean to say is the answer to that prayer never swung my way. My parents never reconciled. I lost the "right" of any child, the "need" to be raised in a home where both mom and dad were present, engaged, nurturing as well as coaching me in life. This was, and is still is, in many ways one of the most significant losses of my life. You would think this loss would go away with time, but being a parent only amplifies the loss. I find I can't pass on what I wasn't given and so I struggle as both husband and dad to discern what I am supposed to do and how and I supposed to do it.

I begin here this morning because I believe I am not alone in my struggle feeling “jipped” in life. I am certain that others are here today who have wrestled with similar issues. We feel like we get the “raw deal” in the situation.

I know many of you feel “loss” when it comes to the current recession (VCC cards). Behind me are the results of the recent online survey I conducted at the request of the Finance Committee. 135 people in our congregation responded. Forget Newsweek, ABC or CNN polls. This is data of VCC by VCC. I want to thank John Kiser for helping me shape the data and create with it the following slides.

50% OF OUR COMMUNITY HAS BEEN IMPACTED BY THE RECESSION. 6% Foreclosure and 13% Job Loss. That largest slice, 32%, is employed, but loss of income.

TWO-THIRDS OF OUR COMMUNITY HAS HAD A CHANGE IN THEIR HOUSEHOLD INCOME. 18% have seen 10-25% reduction. 20% have seen 25-50% reduction. 15% have seen greater than 50%.

ONLY 40% ARE CONFIDENT WITH THEIR CURRENT EMPLOYMENT. That’s the largest slice of the pie. 14% has one person who has lost a job. 10% are anticipating a layoff in the future.

HALF OF THOSE LAID OFF STILL NEED EMPLOYMENT. 31% have found another job, but with less compensation.

When it comes to loss, most of us in this room have felt not a pinch from this Recession, but a liposuction of personal wealth. But I would be naïve to presume that is the ONLY loss here in this room is wealth and employment. Perhaps you anguish over the loss of a marriage. Perhaps it is the loss of a vocation. Loss of privilege to attend a certain school or play a certain sport. Loss of health. The loss that comes through death whether that be a parent, a spouse or God-forbid the death of a child. Perhaps it is the

disappearance of a dream, a vision or calling. As citizens of this planet all of us wrestle with loss.

The by-product of such loss is grief. Simply stated, grief is intense sorrow. It is NOT simply sadness, but a sorrow that overwhelms us.

This morning, as we continue our Lent series on Grace, we face the very and painful question, "Is Grace Enough for Loss?" Each week until Easter we will focus on a person who was part of the Passion Week and unpack together what ISSUES and EMOTIONS they experienced as they watched Jesus go to the cross. Today, we examine together MARY, THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD. She is perhaps the most revered woman in church history and rightly so. She experienced tremendous loss to fulfill God's calling on her life. What I have noticed though is that the more we honor a figure, the more we tend to deify them and gut them of their human struggle.

This morning, I want to look another look at Mary's loss. Bible schools and seminaries, when they teach hermeneutics often instruct the student to examine the words, the grammar, the historical setting, the occasion, the literary style of a passage. Certainly, we will do that this morning, but go one-step further. I want us to exegete the emotions and feelings. I believe this is why Mel Gibson's "Passion" touched so many people. For most viewers, his account was nothing new. What was new was the raw emotion to the Passion especially personified by Maia Morgenstern who played Mary.

Our goal today in our brief time together is to:

1. RECOUNT ALL THE LOSS Mary endured to fulfill God's calling on her life. I want us to consider not only the circumstances but THE PATHOS of each loss especially the loss of her dying son on the cross.
2. And then look at how Jesus ministers TO HER during her hour of loss
3. And then reflect on how He ministers TO US during our hours of loss.

Turn with me to John 19. Now before we look at these few verses together, I want us to recount Mary's loss.

Life of Mary:

According to the Bible, Mary is the only person who covers the entire span of Jesus' life. The Bible gives us six pictures of Mary's life

1. Birth (Matthew 1:18-24 and Luke 1 &2)
2. Boy at the Temple (Luke 2:41-51)

Luke 2:49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my **Father's** house?"

3. Wedding at Cana (John 2:1-12)
4. Jesus' Mother and Brothers (Mark 3:31-35; Lk. 8:19-21)
5. Mary at the Cross (John 19:25-27)
6. Mary and the Apostles at Pentecost (Acts 1:14)

Thus we see that Mary was at Jesus' Birth, Ministry, Death, Resurrection and the upper room at Pentecost. I want us to focus on three aspects of Mary's life (Birth, Interaction with Jesus during His ministry and His death).

Text:

Even though Mary celebrated her calling to be the mother of our Lord (Luke 1:46-55), it was prophesied (or foretold) by Simeon at the dedication of Jesus that GRIEF THROUGH LOSS will come her way.

Luke 2:33 The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

Luke 2:34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against,

Luke 2:35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Luke 2:35 And a SWORD will pierce your own soul too."

For Mary, this sword came into her life in numerous ways. Each time it this sword pieced her, she LOST something.

1. LOSS of REPUTATION. Object of gossip and slander.

In order to embrace her calling, she would be seen as an outcast. A women who slept with a man before marriage.

2. LOSS of HER FIANCE. Rejection from her fiancé and later divorce.

Joseph wouldn't buy the story of an angel coming to her. Because he cared for her, choose to put her away privately. The time frame is not given in the Scriptures, but the days, if not weeks, of this separation must have been very painful.

3. LOSS of HER FAMILY. Seclusion from her family.

She stays with Elizabeth, her aunt, the only person who truly understands her calling. No baby showers. No friends to celebrate.

4. LOSS of WEALTH.

Birth of her firstborn all-alone, away from home and family and in a barn.

5. LOSS of SAFETY. A political and religious refugee.

Herod is out to kill her son.

6. LOSS of HOMELAND. A political and religious refugee.

Because of this, she is forced to leave her homeland and go to Egypt and live as an alien and outcast.

7. LOSS of HER HUSBAND.

The disappearance of Joseph in the narrative leads to her being a single mom.

8. LOSS of the LIFE OF HER SON, JESUS

Roughly the age of 30, her son leaves home to fulfill a calling. His brief season of popularity turns him into an outlaw. He is mocked, ridiculed, falsely accused, tried by the Sanhedrin, the people and Rome itself. He is flogged and then crucified.

Loss is inevitable in this life. It comes uninvited. It does not respect people of their race, wealth, status or religion. It comes in all areas of our existence - Health, wealth, relationships, vocation and calling. And where there is loss, there is GRIEF.

I remember attending the funeral of a Middle-Eastern man hosted in our church in Fremont. Randomly, during the ceremony, women dressed in full black would run up to the casket and embrace it. They would then cry out in the loud voice all the pain they were feeling. The men would grab them and literally pull them back to their seats. The service would continue again for a few minutes and then the women would run up again. I asked a friend of mine why to they interrupt and display such raw emotion. He responded, "The greater the grief, the greater the love."

Everyone here has had a sword of loss of one type or another invade their life. That could be the loss of marriage, the loss of closeness to a wayward child, the loss of a dream in a business taken away by this Recession, the loss of closeness because the family you share does not embrace your faith.

When we find ourselves suffering from such loss we need comfort. Let's look at HOW JESUS MINISTERS TO US IN OUR HOUR OF LOSS. Now let's look at John 19.

John 19:25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

John 19:26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son,"

John 19:27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

There are at least FOUR REASONS that this word of Jesus to his mother and to the beloved disciple is a tremendous encouragement to our faith in our hour of loss.

1. Jesus UNDERSTANDS our loss

Is. 53:3 He was despised and rejected by men, A MAN OF SORROWS, AND FAMILIAR WITH SUFFERING. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Is. 53:4 SURELY HE TOOK UP OUR INFIRMITIES AND CARRIED OUR SORROWS, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.

Matt. 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" – which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Mark 15:34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" – which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

This is not simply a prophetic moment where Jesus remembers to quote Psalm 22 with His last dying breath. Not only in this life, but especially in the cross, He understands the many losses you and I both face in this world.

Where was God when...

This question may not always be verbalized, but I believed it is often asked.

"Where was God when...

Every night as a child before I went to bed alone I prayed this prayer, "Jesus bring mommy and daddy back together."

Where was God when bad things happen? The answer is not as difficult as you think. Though His Son, Jesus, God is dying on a cross. On the cross the convergence of human suffering and God's intervention meet. It may not be answer we want, but it certainly the answer we need. The cross is not a moment in time. It transcends time. Reaching back in history and forward to today, the cross shows us that God is not disengaged, hard hearted, ignorant or cold to the harsh realities of the world we all share.

The cross shows us not only God's intervention into man, but the depth He is willing to pay to see you and I find healing and hope. God bankrupts heaven, holds nothing back to help you and I in the misery we find ourselves. Certainly, Jesus understands our loss.

2. Jesus WILLINGNESS to care for us in loss

If Jesus was so eager to care for his mother in her hour of need, HOW MUCH MORE IS HE EAGER TO CARE FOR HIS DISCIPLES WHO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD TODAY AND DO IT. Ordinarily one would reason just the opposite: IF HE LOVED HIS DISCIPLES WHO WERE NOT HIS RELATIVES, HOW MUCH MORE WOULD HE LOVE HIS OWN MOTHER. But Jesus didn't view things in an ordinary way. With him it was strangely true: IF HE LOVED HIS MOTHER WITH A NATURAL AFFECTION, HOW MUCH MORE CAN HIS OBEDIENT DISCIPLES BE CONFIDENT ON HIS LOVE.

We know this because of an incident recorded for us in Luke 8:19-21: His mother came to him and his brothers also, and they were unable to get to him because of the crowds. And it was reported to him, *"Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see you."* But he answered and said to them, *"My mother and my brothers are THOSE WHO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND DO IT."* That was not a depreciation of his mother and brothers, BUT AN EXALTATION OF OBEDIENCE. It means very clearly, THOSE WHO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND DO IT HAVE A MORE READY ACCESS TO JESUS' FELLOWSHIP AND HELP THAN DO HIS OWN FAMILY MEMBERS.

My friends, there is nothing SAFER and more REWARDING than TO HEAR and DO the Word of God, because Jesus said, those who hear and do the Word of God are my mother and my brothers. Loving obedience to the Word of God puts us in a relationship to Jesus which is more intimate and more certain to be heard and helped than his nearest family relations. What a tremendous encouragement to our faith this provision of Jesus for His mother is for you and I! If He took care of her in her hour of loss, will He not *much more* comfort and provide for all that you and I need?

3. Jesus' ABILITY to console and to provide for us in our loss.

Another reason that this word to Jesus' mother is an encouragement to our faith is this: if Jesus could provide for the needs of his own in a moment of his deepest weakness and humiliation, HOW MUCH MORE CAN HE PROVIDE FOR YOUR NEED IN HIS PRESENT POWER AND EXALTATION! Not only are you and I, as an obedient disciples, in a better position than Jesus' own mother to receive blessing at the hand of the Lord, BUT "HE" IS NOW IN A BETTER POSITION TO GIVE IT TO YOU THAN HE WAS TO HER THEN.

According to Ephesians 1:19, 20 the greatness of God's power which is working on behalf of us who believe "*which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.*" The satisfaction made for our sin at Calvary was so complete that God honored this sacrifice by raising Jesus from the dead and giving Him incomparable glory and power and wealth of all things. And so when the apostle contemplates whether we can bank on Christ for the provision of our need, it is this wealth of glory that gives him assurance.

Paul says, "My God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). The risen Christ is so full of glorious riches that he need not turn anyone away.

As Paul says in Romans 10:12: "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches to all who call upon him."

Therefore, the word of Jesus to his mother from the cross is a great encouragement to our faith. For if He could provide for his own in the moment of His weakness and humiliation, HOW MUCH MORE CAN HE MEET ALL OUR NEEDS TODAY FROM THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, FULL OF POWER AND WEALTH AND GLORY.

4. Jesus PROVIDES for us in our loss through our new spiritual family - THE CHURCH

The fourth reason Jesus' word to his mother encourages our faith is that it illustrates for us the benefits of the church, the body of Christ. Contrary to custom and expectation, Jesus did NOT admonish his own brothers to care for their mother. Whatever the reason for not putting Mary in the care of her other sons, the new relationship between Mary and John illustrates for us the provision made for us in the body of Christ.

You recall how Jesus told the rich man to sell all he had and follow him. The man turned away, and Jesus said, *"It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."* (Matt. 19:23). And Peter said, *"We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?"* (Matt. 19:27). And Jesus said, *"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life"* (Matt. 19:29). Now where in this life are we going to receive 100 children and 100 mothers? Answer: in the church, the family of God.

When Jesus says to Mary: "Look on John as your son"; and to John: "Look on Mary as your mother"; he is showing us how our needs are to be met through the Church. Therefore, one of the gifts Jesus gave to us from the cross was the church: a loving, caring, sustaining, encouraging family beyond family. And it is a great encouragement to our faith that he illustrates the meaning of the church the way he did in the relationship between John and Mary.

So let us all take courage in the care and power and provision of our Lord.

If He endured the cross, He certainly understands what you and I face.

If He was eager to care for his mother, how much more eager will he be today to care for those who hear and do the Word of God!

If Jesus could provide for the needs of his own in the moment of his greatest weakness and humiliation, how much more can he provide for your need in his present wealth of power and exaltation.

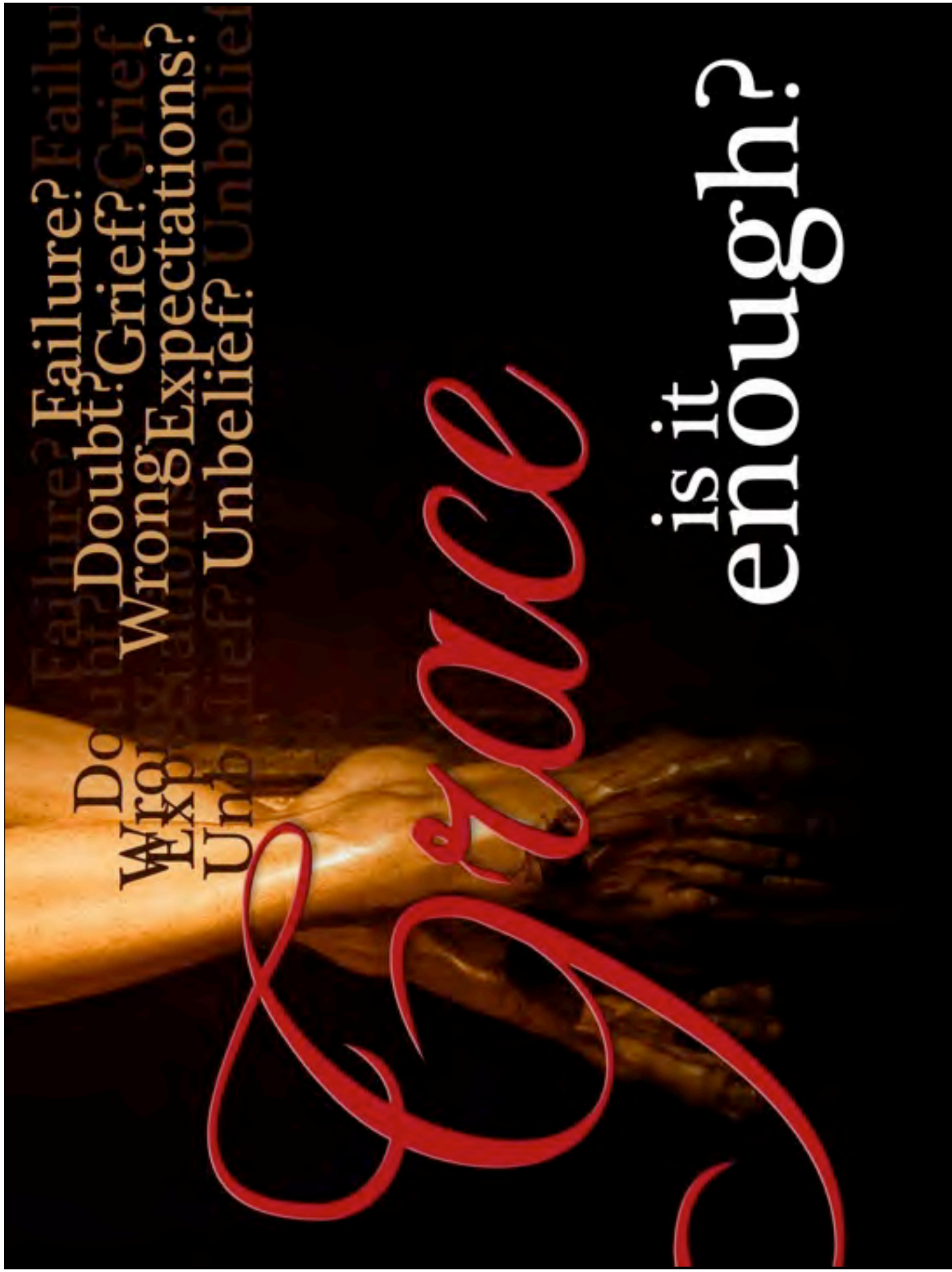
And if Jesus purchased the church with his own blood and ordained that in it deprived mothers find sons and sons find mothers, then no one should be without a caring family today in the body of Christ. Amen.

*** Kelly's story finale ***

Conclusion:

My observation is that we don't always dignify the loss. We tell ourselves that its big deal. Suck it up. Press on. That is what my friends, Raim and Diana, felt the medical profession told them when they were told their unborn child had Dandy Walker syndrome. They were told that child would probably not go term and if born would have horrible brain damage. The doctor's recommendation was to abort the child, but he respected their faith beliefs. I remember the day at Starbuck in Union City where Raim asked me, "What do I do Pastor?" They choose to keep the baby. She carried the baby several months and one day I received a call, "The baby is coming." I was there for the delivery and the for the short time the child lived.

Prayer Chart.



Do you have Doubt? Failure? Grief? Wrong Expectations? Unbelief?

Grace

is it
enough?

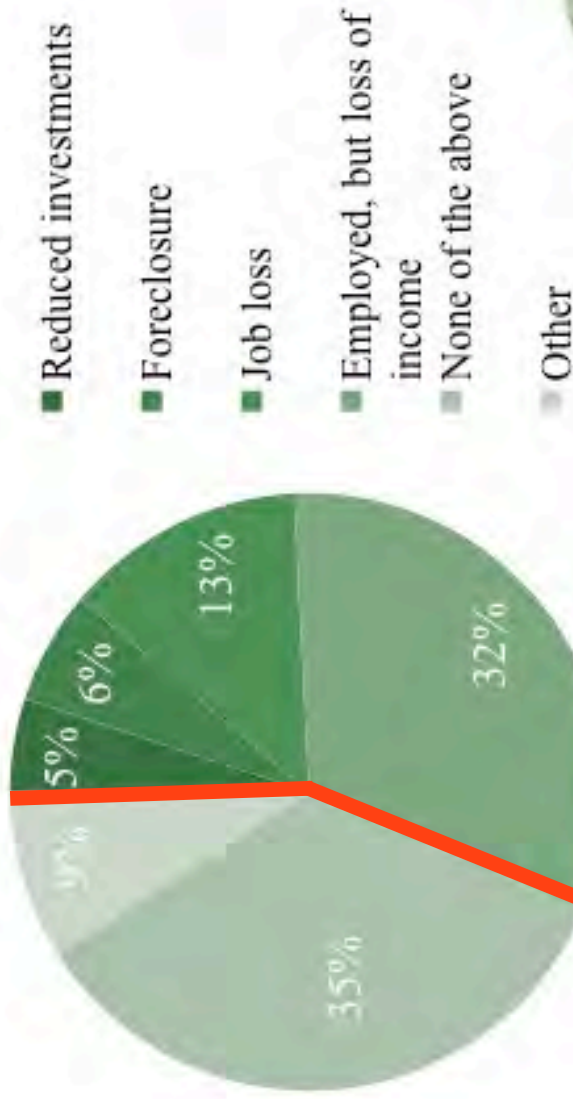


Piece Of Mind

Economic Challenges of our Congregation

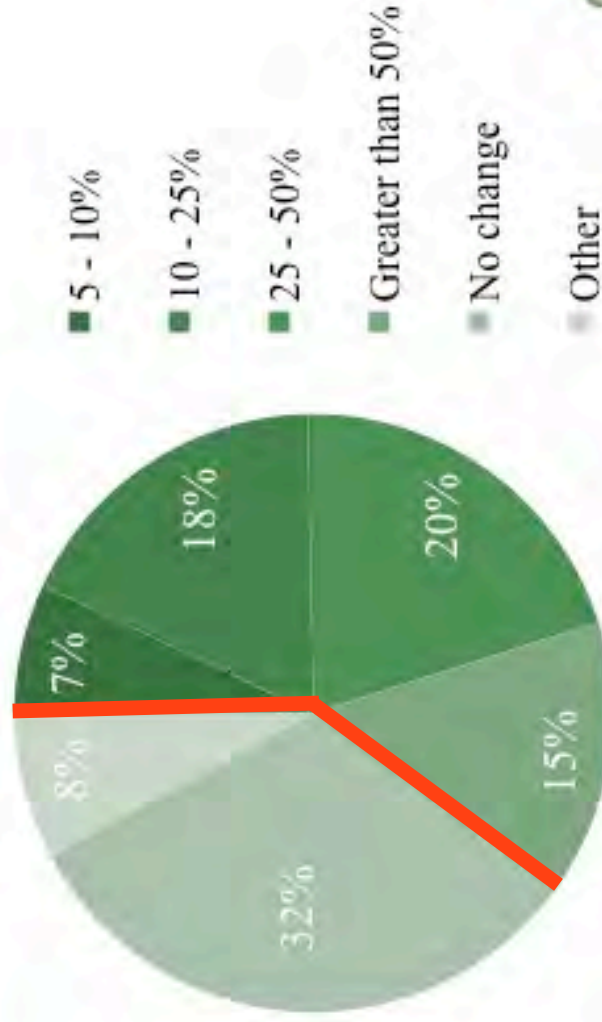
Over 50% of our community has been impacted by the recession

- *We are all personally impacted by.....*



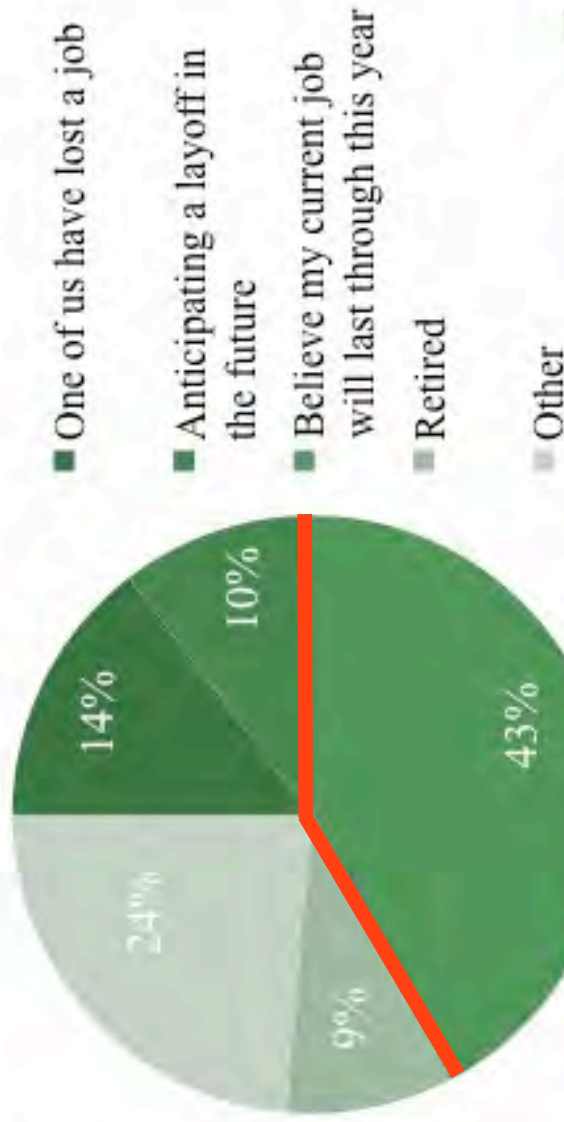
Over two thirds of our community has had a change in their household income

- *We have seen a reduction in our household income by.....*



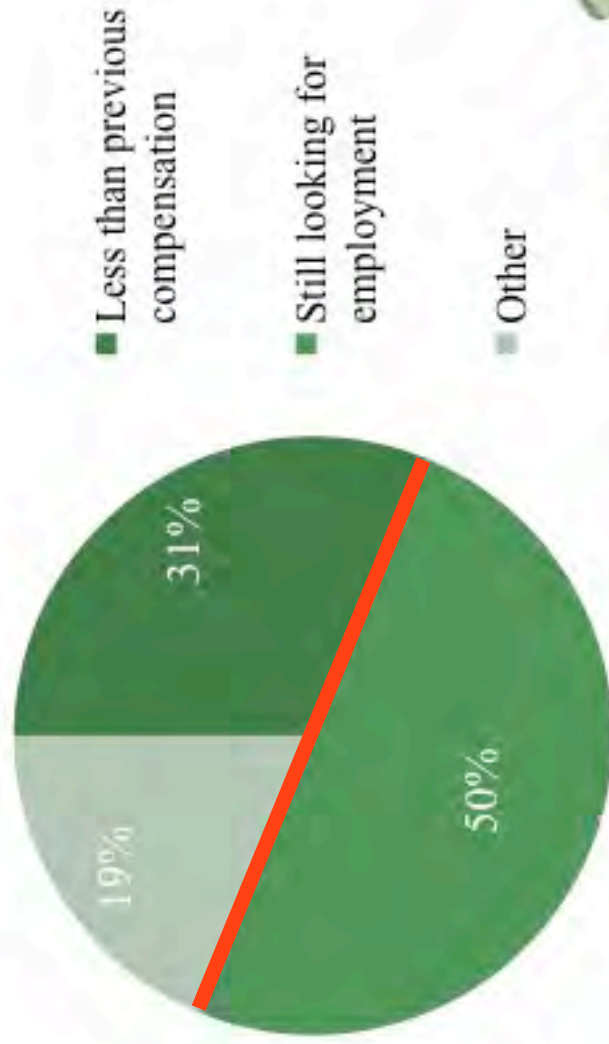
Only 40% are confident with their current employment

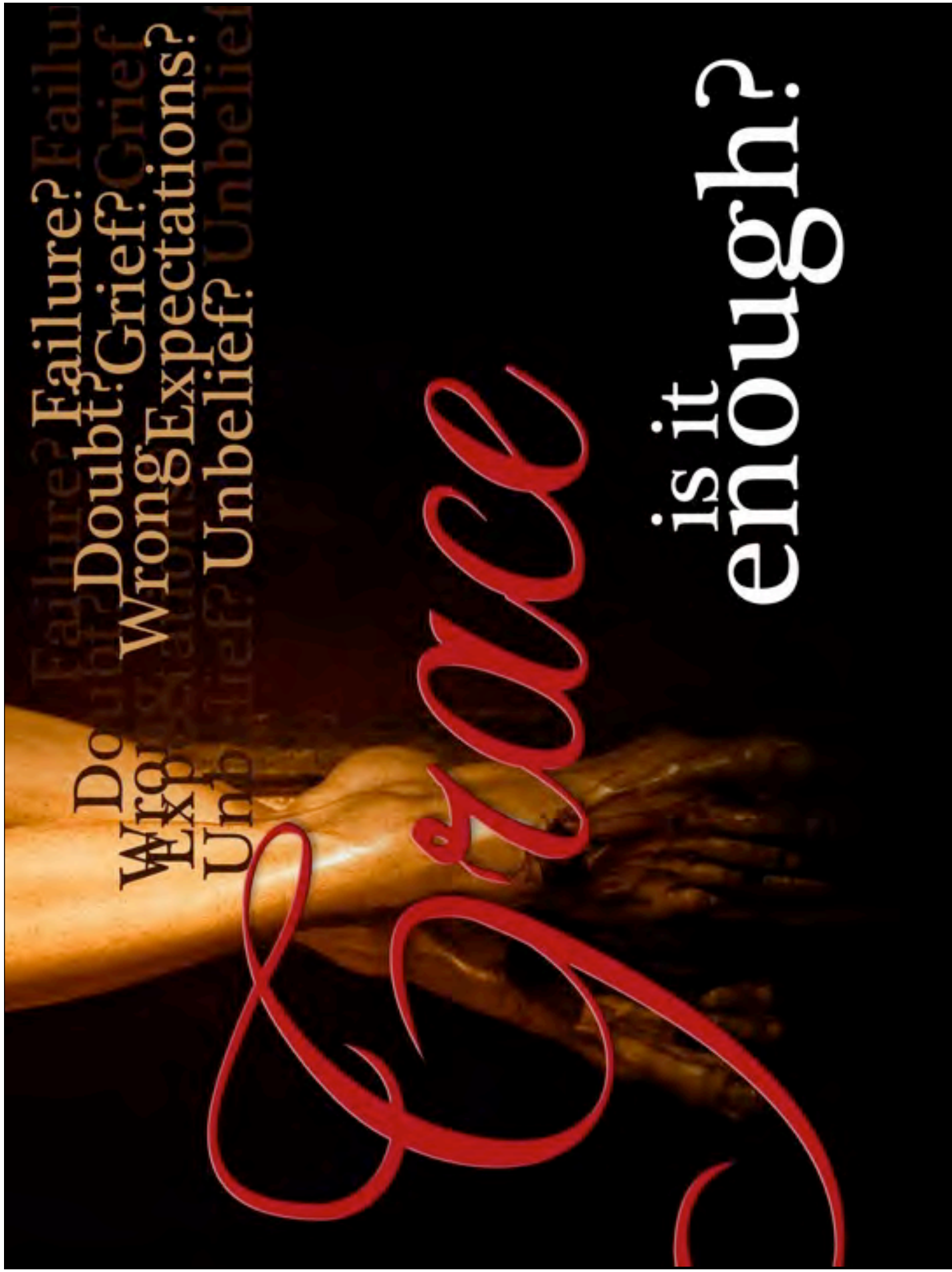
- *Concerning our employment....*



Half of those laid off still need employment

- *We were laid off but found new employment at....*





Do you have? Failure? Failure?
Wrong? Doubt? Doubt?
Expectations? Grief? Grief?
Unbelief? Unbelief?

Grace


is it
enough?

Mary and Jesus



1. **Birth of Jesus** (Mt. 1:18-24 and Luke 1&2)
2. **Boy at the Temple** (Lk. 2:41-51)
3. **Wedding at Cana** (Jn. 2:1-12)
4. **Jesus' Mother and Brothers**
(Mt. 12:46-50; Mk. 3:31-35; Lk. 8:19-21)
5. **Mary at the Cross** (Jn. 19:25-27)
6. **Mary and the Apostles** (Acts 1:14)

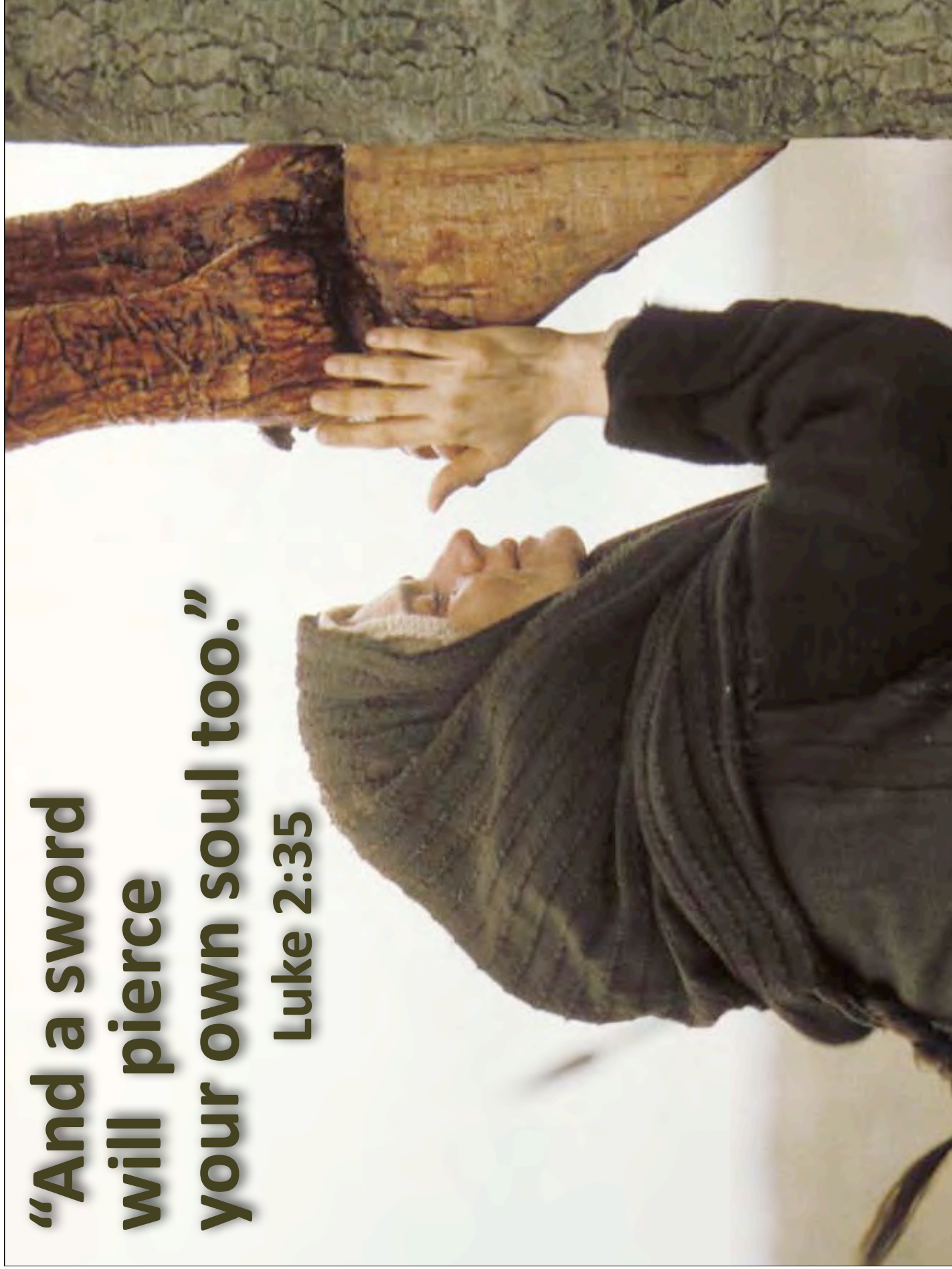
Mary and Jesus



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**“And a sword
will pierce
your own soul too.”**

Luke 2:35



**“Swords” that
caused Mary’s**

LOSS:

1. Reputation

2. Fiancé

3. Family

4. Wealth



**“Swords” that
caused Mary’s**

LOSS:

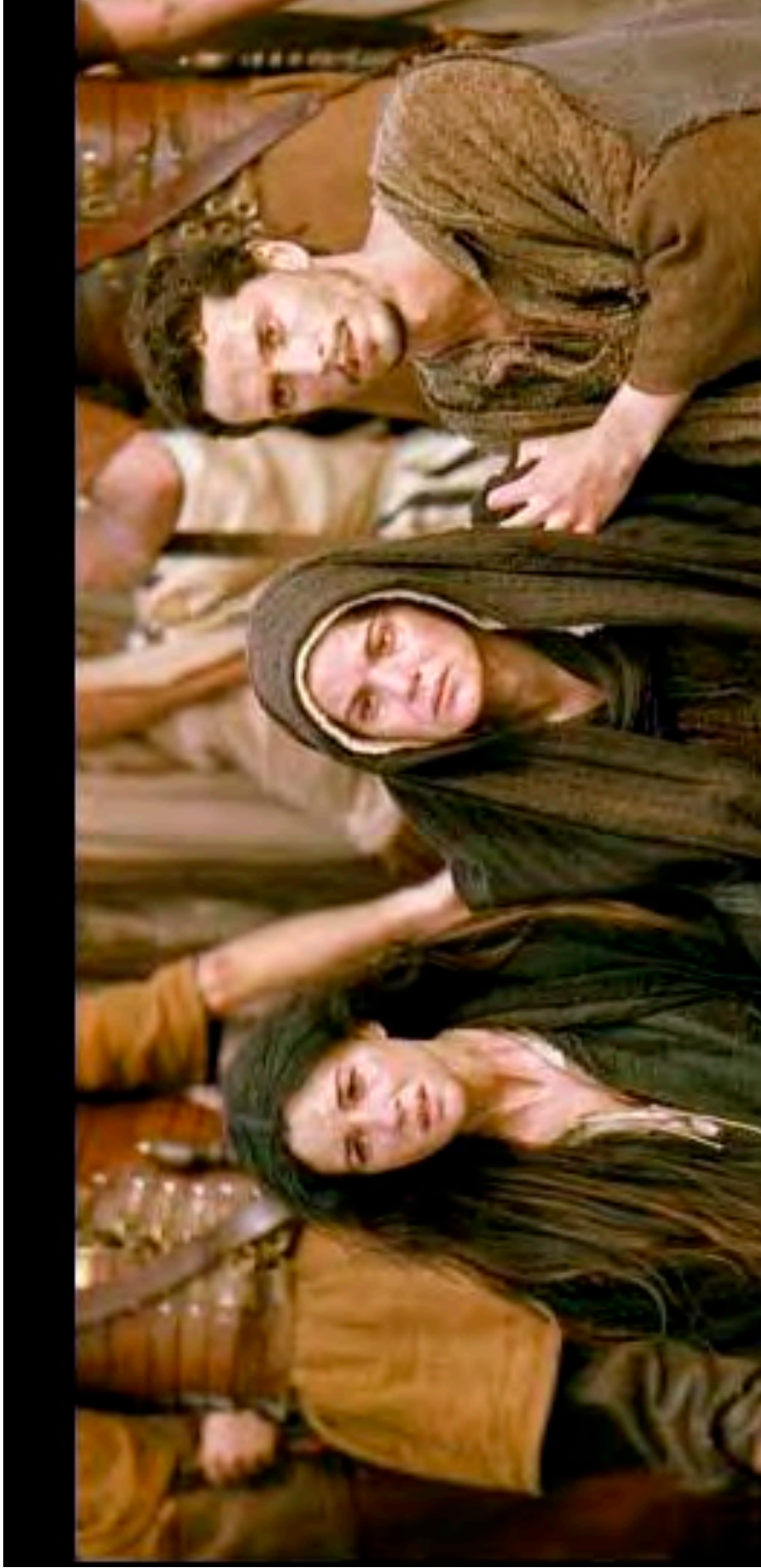
5. Safety

6. Homeland

7. Husband

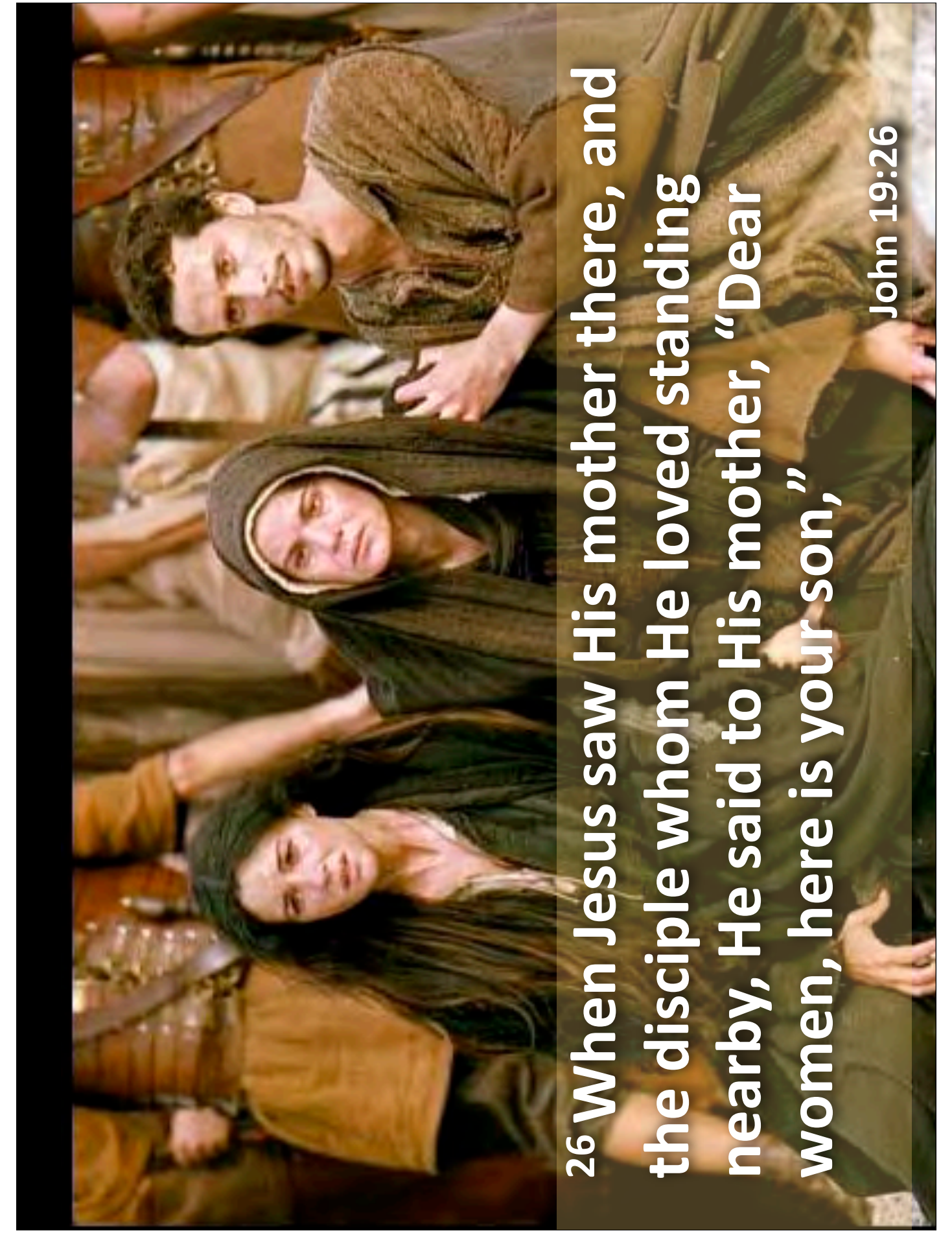
8. Life of her son, Jesus





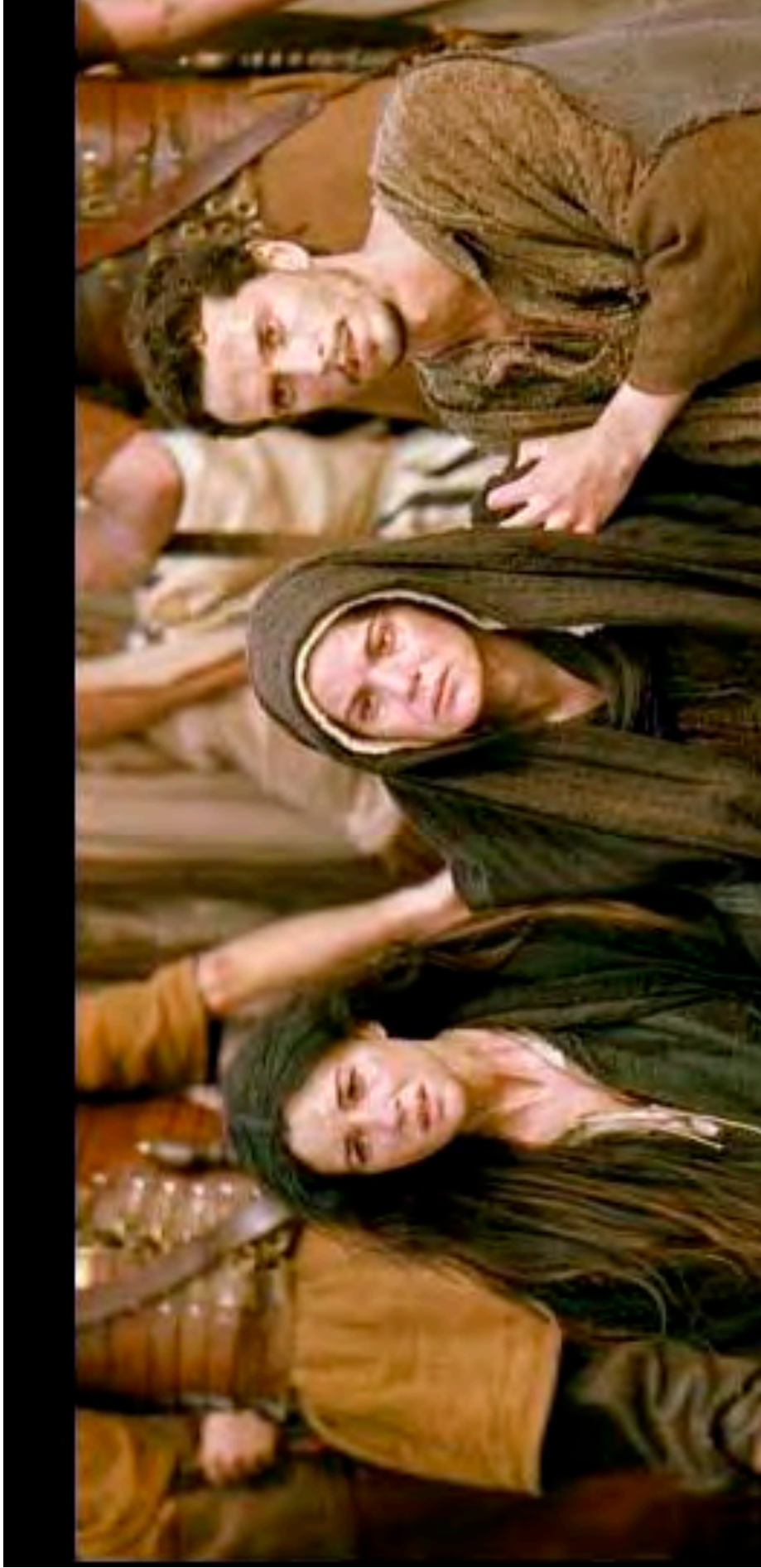
25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

John 19:25



26 When Jesus saw His mother there, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Dear women, here is your son,”

John 19:26



27 and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on the disciple took her into his home.

John 19:27

Jesus UNDERSTANDS our loss.

1.

Failure? Failure? Failure?
Doubt? Doubt? Grief? Grief?
Wrong Expectations? Expectations?
Unbelief? Unbelief?


Grace is it
enough?

Jesus WILLINGNESS to us
care for us in loss.

2.

Failure? Failure? Failure?
Doubt? Doubt? Grief? Grief?
Wrong Expectations? Expectations?
Unbelief? Unbelief?

Grace is it
enough?



¹⁹ Now Jesus' mother and brother came to see Him, but they were not able to get near Him, because of the crowd. ²⁰ Someone told Him, "Your mother and brother are standing outside, wanting to see you." ²¹ He replied, "My mother and brothers are **those who hear God's word and put it into practice.**"

Luke 8:19-21


Wrong Expectations? Unbelief? Unbelief?
Failure? Failure? Failure?
Doubt? Doubt? Doubt? Grief? Grief?
Wrong Expectations? Expectations?
Unbelief? Unbelief?

Jesus' ABILITY to
console and to provide
for us in our loss.

3.

Failure? Failure? Failure?
Doubt? Doubt? Grief? Grief?
Wrong Expectations? Unbelief?
Wrong Expectations? Unbelief?

Grace is it
enough?



¹⁹ and **His incomparably great power** for us who believe. That power is like the working of His mighty strength, ²⁰ which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at the right hand in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 1:19-20

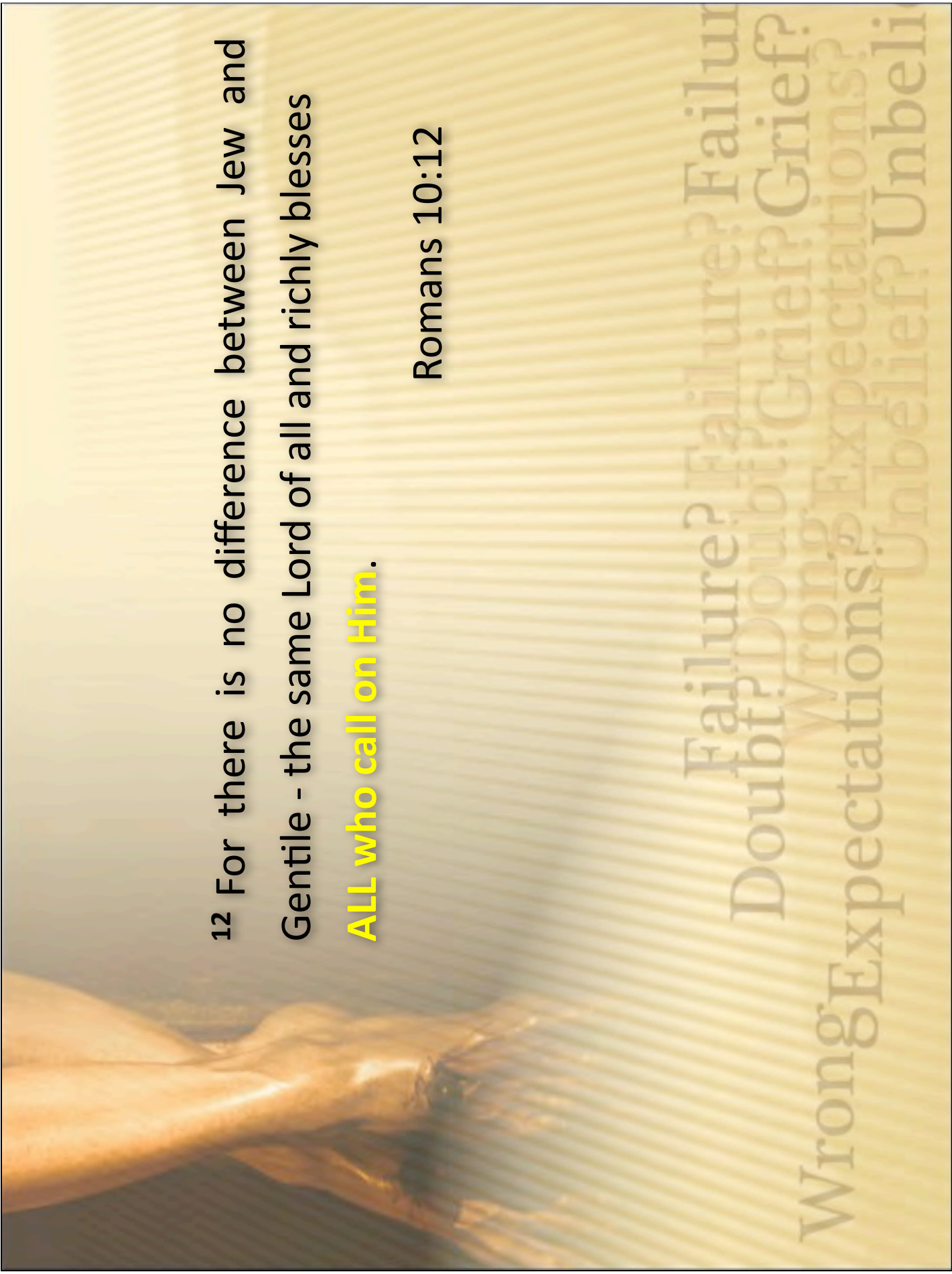
Failure? Failure? Failure?
Doubt? Doubt? Doubt?
Grief? Grief? Grief?
Wrong Expectations?
Unbelief? Unbelief?



¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according
to **His glorious riches** in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19

Failure? Failure? Failure?
Doubt? Doubt? Doubt?
Wrong Expectations?
Unbelief? Unbelief?



¹² For there is no difference between Jew and
Gentile - the same Lord of all and richly blesses

ALL who call on Him.

Romans 10:12


Failure? Failure? Failure?
Doubt? Doubt? Doubt?
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Wrong Expectations?
Unbelief? Unbelief?

Jesus PROVIDES for us
in our loss through our
new spiritual family -
THE CHURCH.

4.

Failure? Failure? Failure?
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Wrong Expectations? Unbelief?

Grace is it enough?



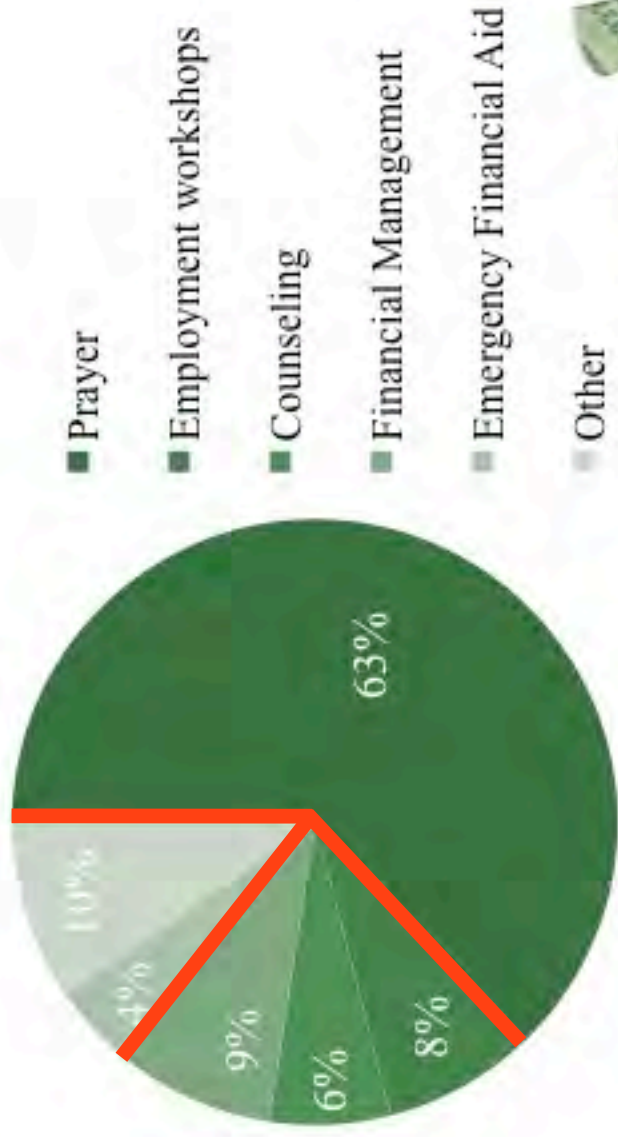
²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive **a hundred times** as much and will inherit eternal life.

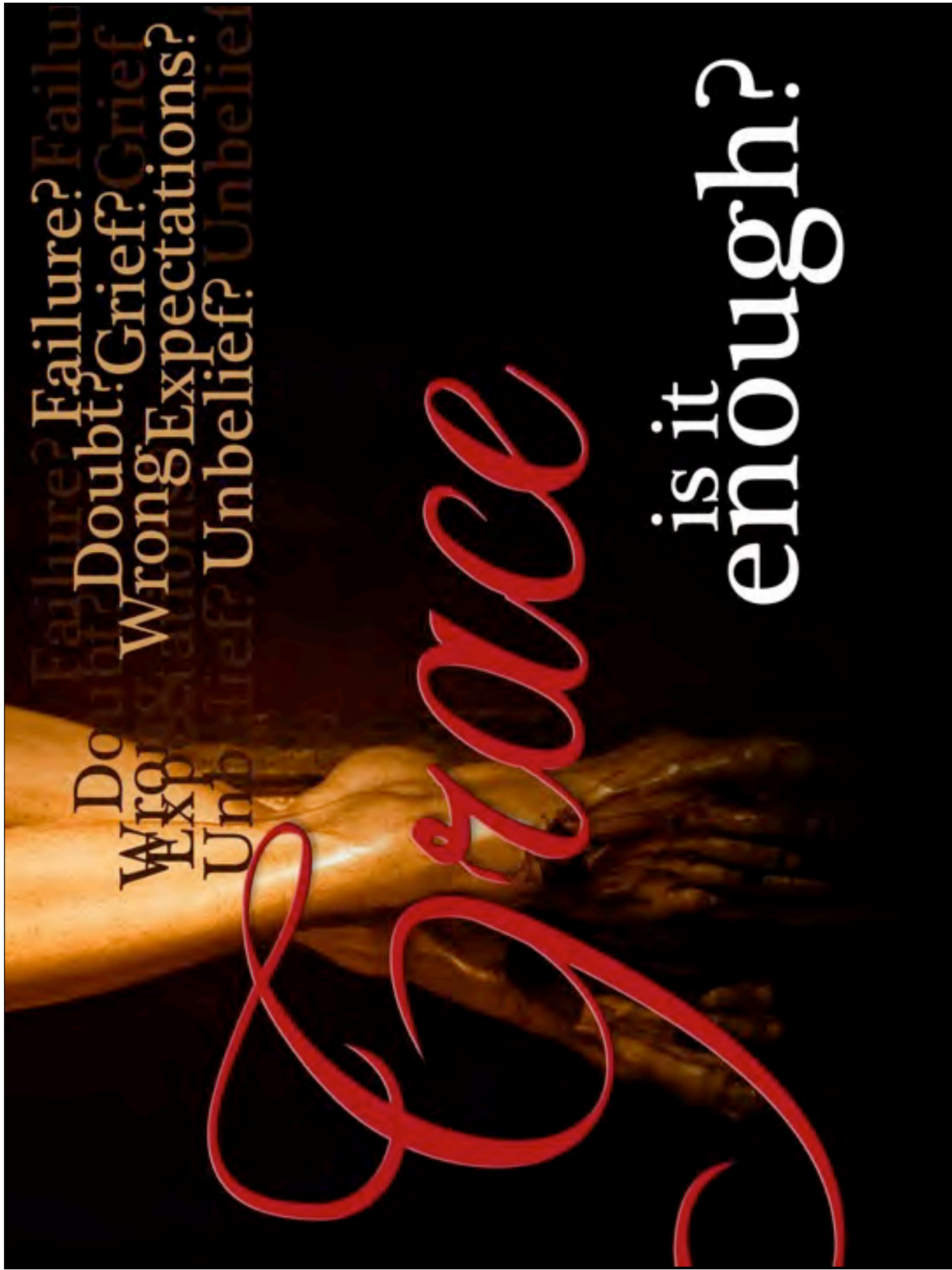
Matthew 18:29

Failure? Failure? Failure?
Doubt? Doubt? Doubt?
Wrong Expectations? Wrong Expectations?
Unbelief? Unbelief?

Overwhelming we need **prayer** however, we also can do much more

- *Ways VCC can help you personally through this*





Failure? Failure?
Doubt? Doubt?
Wrong? Wrong?
Expectations? Expectations?
Unbelief? Unbelief?

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Grace

is it
enough?