

ASHLEY OR

THE RESURRECTED MARRIAGE

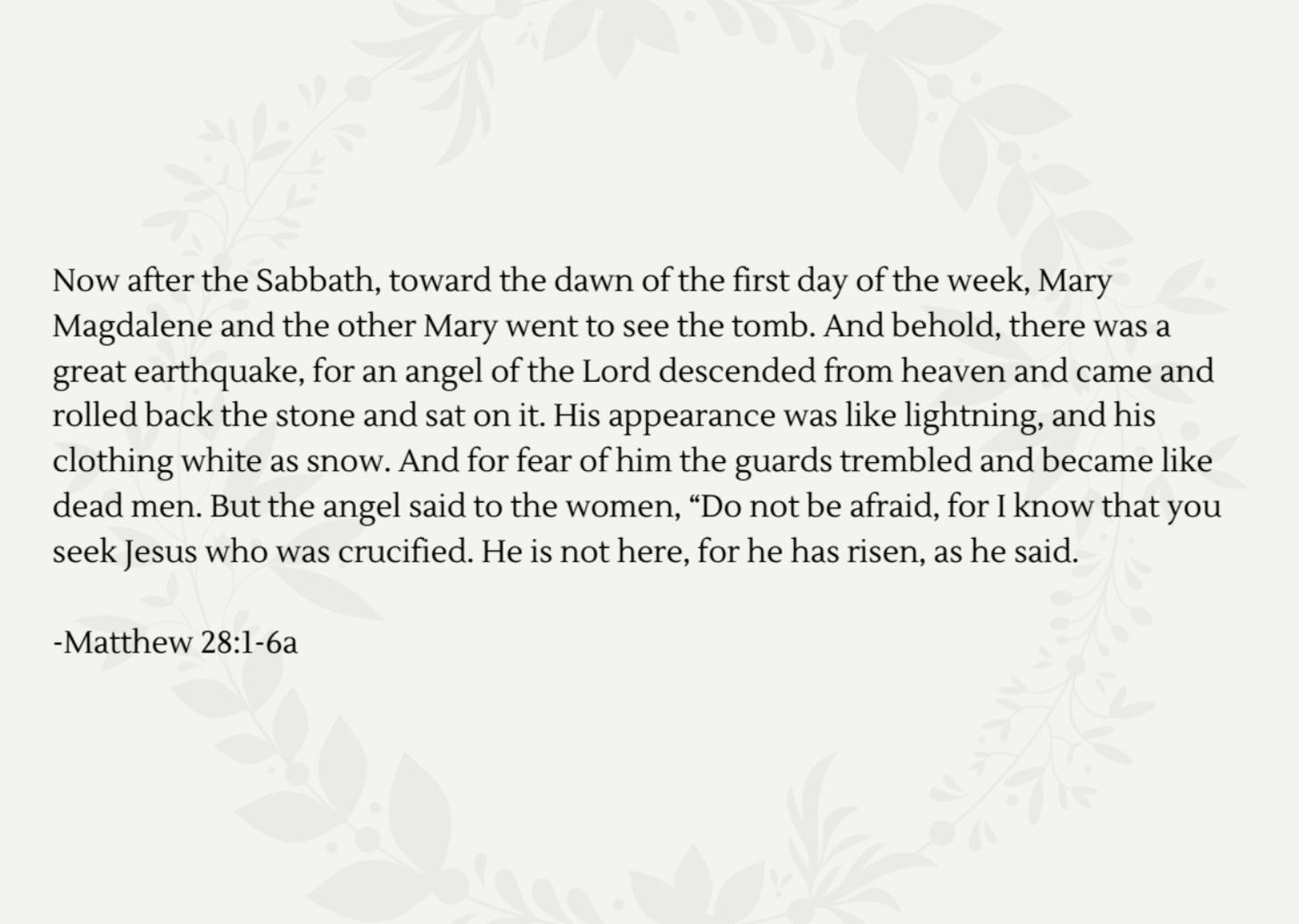
This 5-day devotional for married couples explores what wisdom Jesus's resurrection has to offer those whose marriage is in need of a resurrection.

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JESUS' RESURRECTION OFFERS
HOPE

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DAY 1
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Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said.

-Matthew 28:1-6a

“Mary, it’s time to go to the tomb.”

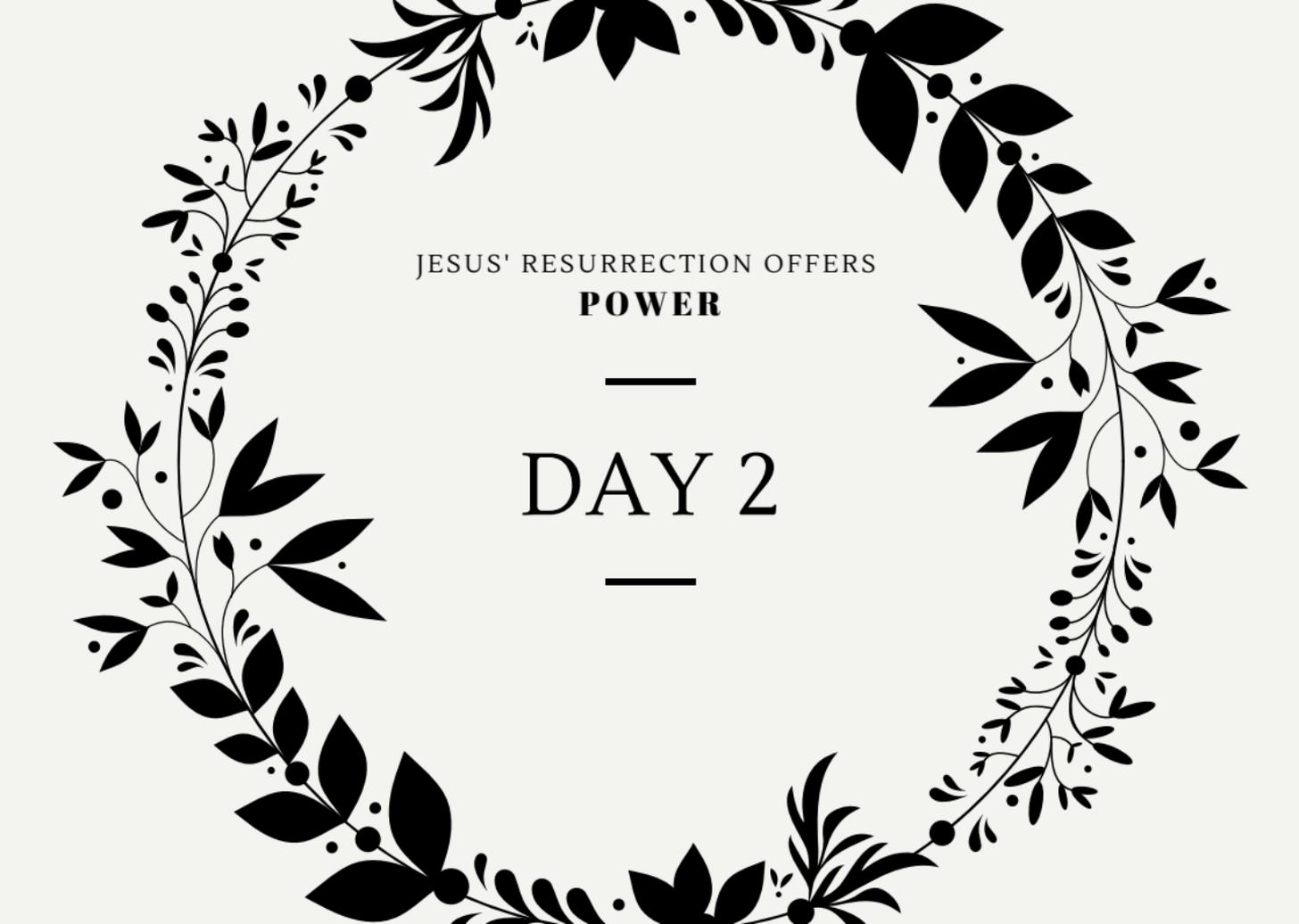
Mary Magdalene was softly nudged awake by Jesus’ mother. She opened her eyes and looked at the gentle, beautiful face of the mother of her Lord. All at once the grief came back to her like a rock in the pit of her stomach. Her Lord had been dead three days, the one whom she thought would rescue her people had been killed. Had abandoned them? The sun would soon come up, bringing light on the world and mocking the deep darkness she felt overshadowed her. Nothing was the same anymore.

Have you ever felt like that in your marriage? Like your world has just been turned upside down? Like what you thought would always be stable and secure turned out to feel false and shaky? Or maybe for you it was more of a gradual disappointment, a constant chipping away at your union until it felt like there was nothing left to chip anymore? That’s how the women who were tending Jesus’ body felt too. They had expected a savior to overturn the Roman Empire and free the Jewish people but the one in whom they put their trust failed, or at least it seemed so. It seemed like the story was over.

That's how the women who were tending Jesus' body felt too. They had expected a savior to overturn the Roman Empire and free the Jewish people but the one in whom they put their trust failed, or at least it seemed so. It seemed like the story was over. The feelings we have after experiencing great difficulties in marriage can be so overwhelming that it seems like there is no hope. But just like the women who were about to head to Jesus' tomb found out, there is Hope. It was not the end of the story at all. It was actually the beginning.

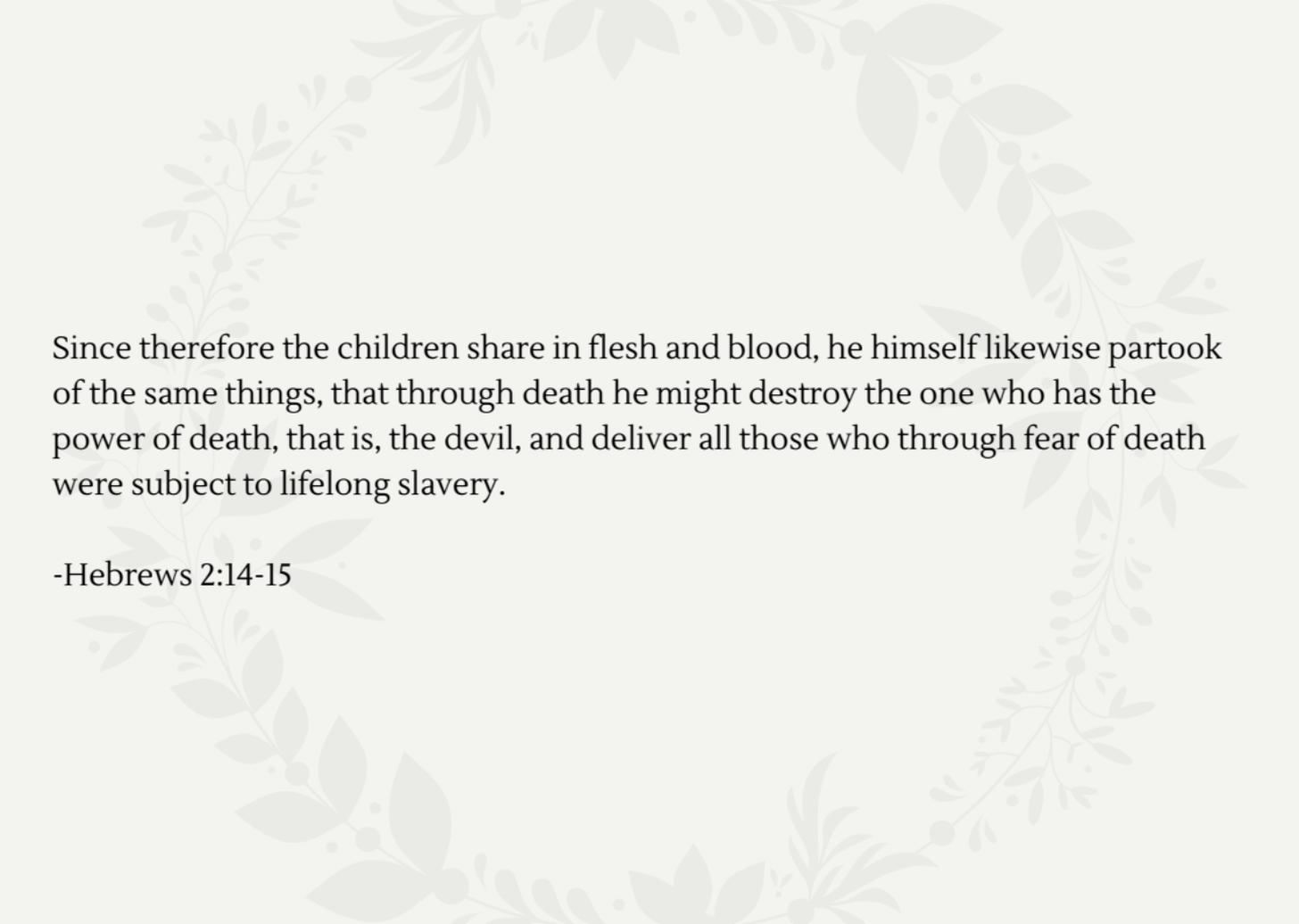
Jesus' death and resurrection paved the way for Hope. Hope in Him for salvation and eternity with God in Heaven, of course. But also hope in Him for the resurrection and redemption of what seems dead in this life, including our marriages. The night is often the darkest before the dawn. Look to Christ in the darkness you are feeling, He will shine with the light of the truth that He can resurrect the dead and bring the dawn to your marriage.

Call to Action: Spend some time in prayer reflecting on the Hope you have in Christ and His ability to resurrect your marriage.



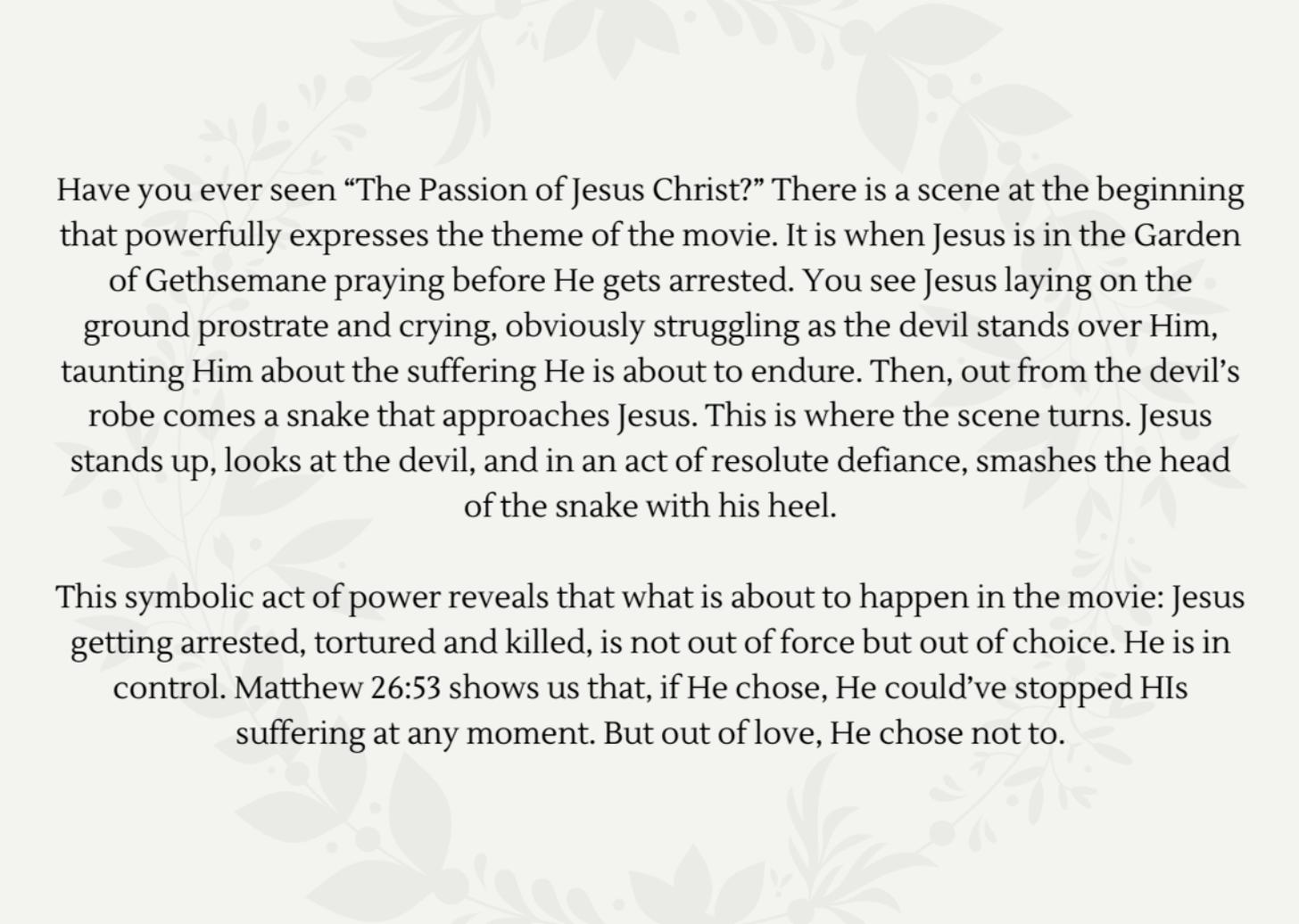
JESUS' RESURRECTION OFFERS
POWER

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DAY 2
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Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

-Hebrews 2:14-15

A faint, light-colored floral pattern consisting of leaves and small flowers is scattered across the background of the page.

Have you ever seen “The Passion of Jesus Christ?” There is a scene at the beginning that powerfully expresses the theme of the movie. It is when Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane praying before He gets arrested. You see Jesus laying on the ground prostrate and crying, obviously struggling as the devil stands over Him, taunting Him about the suffering He is about to endure. Then, out from the devil’s robe comes a snake that approaches Jesus. This is where the scene turns. Jesus stands up, looks at the devil, and in an act of resolute defiance, smashes the head of the snake with his heel.

This symbolic act of power reveals that what is about to happen in the movie: Jesus getting arrested, tortured and killed, is not out of force but out of choice. He is in control. Matthew 26:53 shows us that, if He chose, He could’ve stopped His suffering at any moment. But out of love, He chose not to.

When our marriages struggle, we may feel a sense of powerlessness. The fear that nothing will change and we cannot affect it to. But this is a lie the devil may be whispering into your ear. How do I know that? Because Hebrews 2:14 says that Jesus has broken the power of the devil. In your life? In your marriage? Yes! When Jesus crushed the head of the snake, He reversed the curse that affected all of History, the curse in Genesis 3. The curse that brings division and death to marriages.

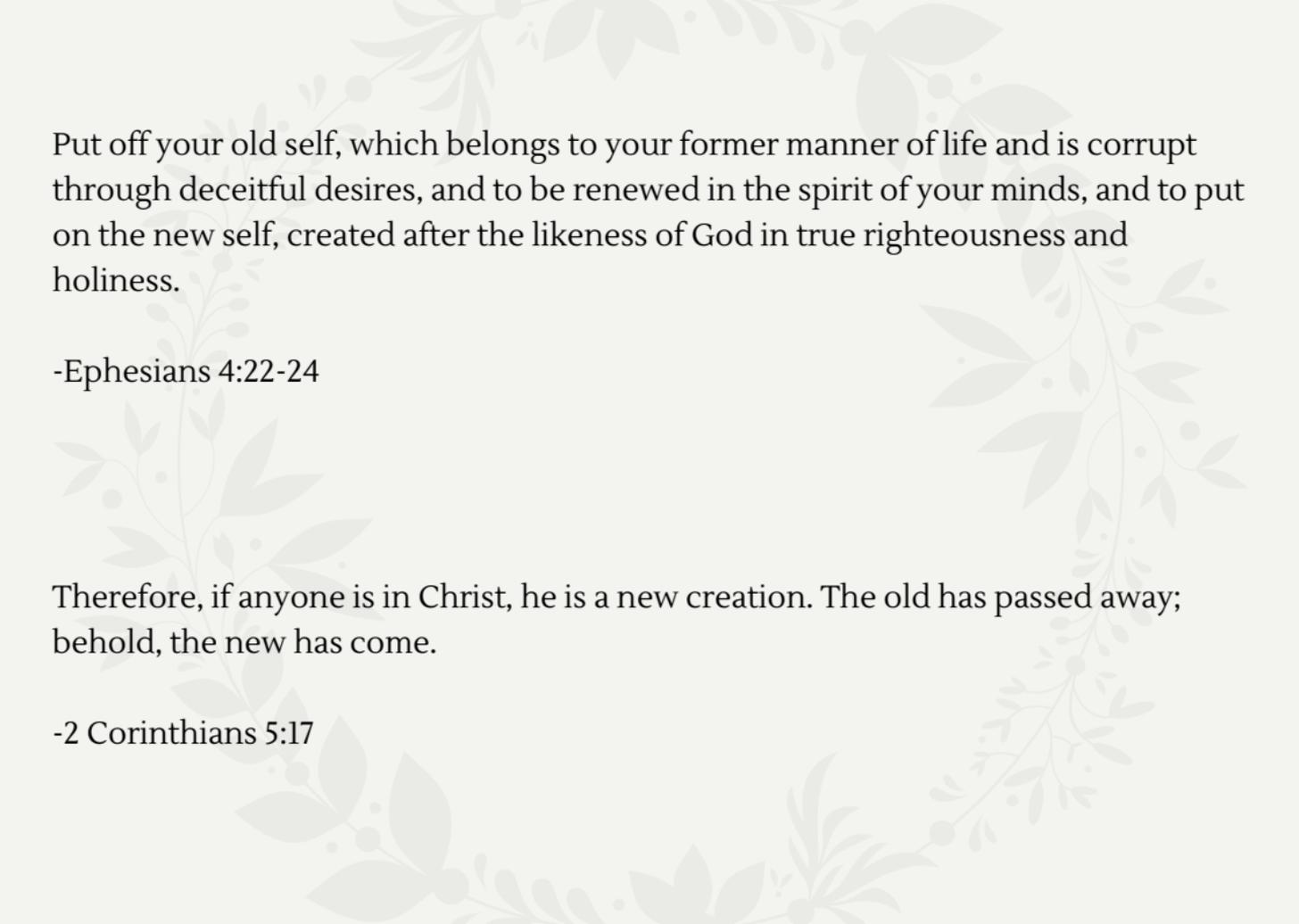
Can God transform what feels hopeless? Absolutely. Can He affect you to change your marriage? Absolutely. If you are a believer, the power that resided in Jesus to overcome the cross, resides in you through the Holy Spirit. What would it look like for you to stand with the same defiant resolution Jesus had and crush the head of the snake?

Call to Action: Watch the scene from the movie on youtube and then write out what the devil may be taunting you with. Pray and ask God will it look like for you to stand the way Jesus did and smash the head of the snake.



JESUS' RESURRECTION OFFERS
NEW LIFE

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DAY 3
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A decorative floral wreath made of light green leaves and small berries, framing the text on a white background.

Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

-Ephesians 4:22-24

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

-2 Corinthians 5:17

In one of Keanu Reeves lesser known films, “A Walk In The Clouds,” he plays the romantic rescuer of a pregnant girl who is returning home to her close knit Mexican-American family and her very traditional father. As the story develops, the tension between Keanu and the father also develops. The father struggles in showing the love he feels for his daughter and instead comes off as angry, negative, and hypercritical. At the end (spoiler alert) the apparent devastating loss of the family vineyard, breaks the father down. He has lost everything but his family and experiences a dynamic shift, He realizes the pain his anger has caused and desperately asks for guidance. He asks his own daughter to show him how to love.

This is one of my favorite Keanu Reeves movies, but not because of Keanu. It is because of this shift in the father and his humble plea for help. You see what Ephesians 4 describes as the “old self” the one that is “corrupted by its deceitful desires” throughout most of the movie and in the last few minutes get a glimpse of the beginning of his being made new.

When Jesus Christ resurrected, He made the way for this to be a reality. The amazing thing about becoming a believer in Jesus Christ is that new life does not just start in Heaven. It starts now. Through Christ, the person that struggles with anger, resentment, insecurity, or a critical spirit (to name a few) can be free NOW.

What does the “old man/woman” look like in your marriage? I am not talking about your spouse, I am talking about you. As much as we might want our spouse to change, we can only control ourselves. So, what are the hurts that you have caused? The responsibility that you can take for dividing the union that God brought together. Even if your responsibility is only 1%, what is your 1%? Jesus Christ can affect change in your marriage by changing you. He can bring the new life brought about by the resurrection right into your marriage and it can start with you.

Call to Action: Make a list of what the old man/woman looks like for you in your marriage. Then pray and ask God to begin to change you. After your prayer, write down two action items that you can do to begin to affect change in your marriage.



JESUS' RESURRECTION OFFERS
FREEDOM

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DAY 4
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Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

-2 Corinthians 3:12–17

For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

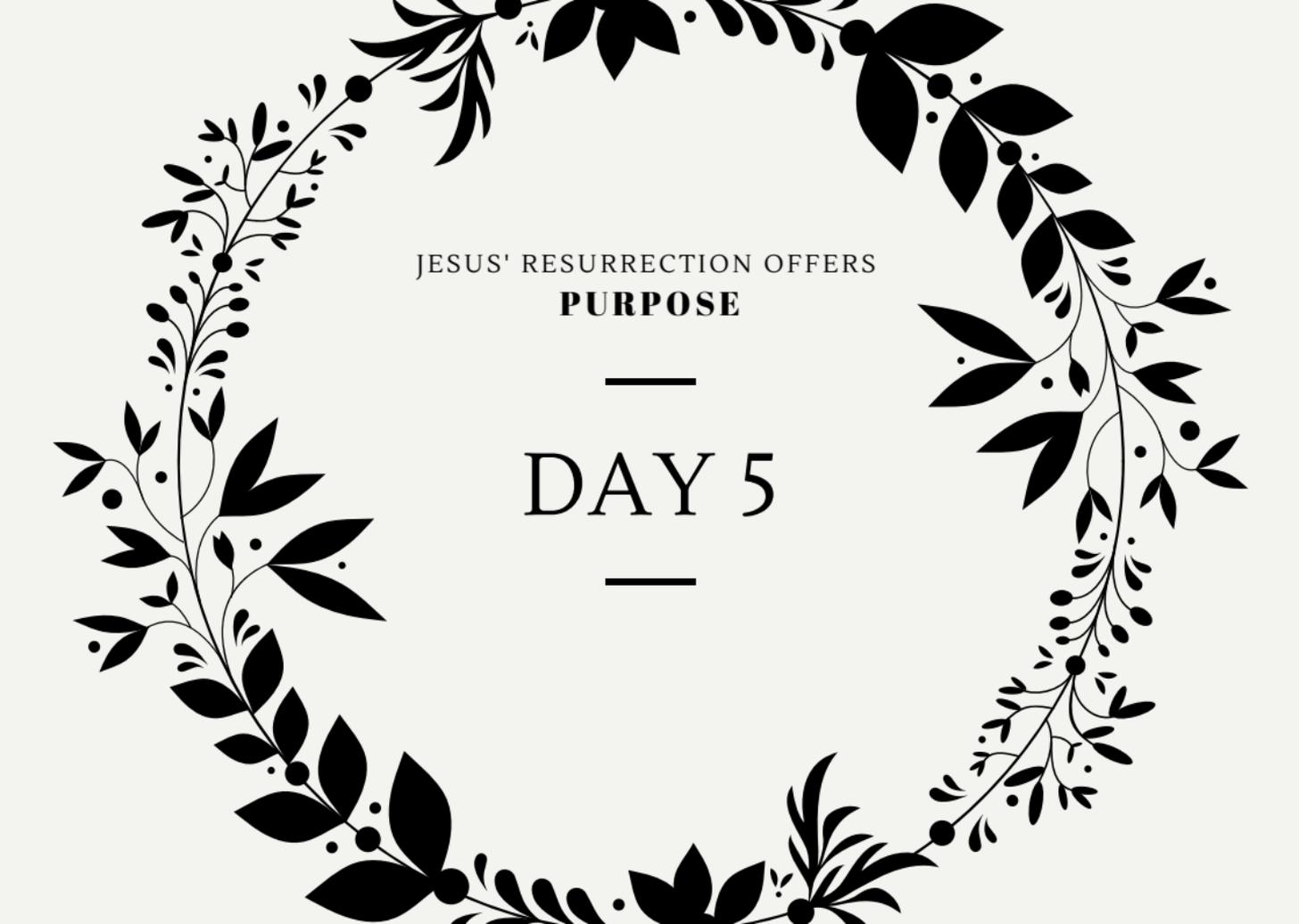
-Galatians 5:13

Lauren Diagle's song "You Say" is about finding her security and her identity in Christ. It is about the fight between the lies that her identity is the result of her circumstances and the timeless truth of what God says about her.

Contrast this with popular culture which glorifies music about losing yourself in another person. The "I am lost without you" narrative that underlies much of our popular movies and music. The narrative that says we NEED our partner to be everything to us, to keep us steady. But what if that sweet romance at the beginning of your relationship wears off. What if your partner begins disrespecting you? Or not loving you the way you need? Does this mean that they actually are not your true love and you are justified in looking around at other places? Or could it mean, that you expect your spouse to fulfill you or affirm you in ways they were never meant to.

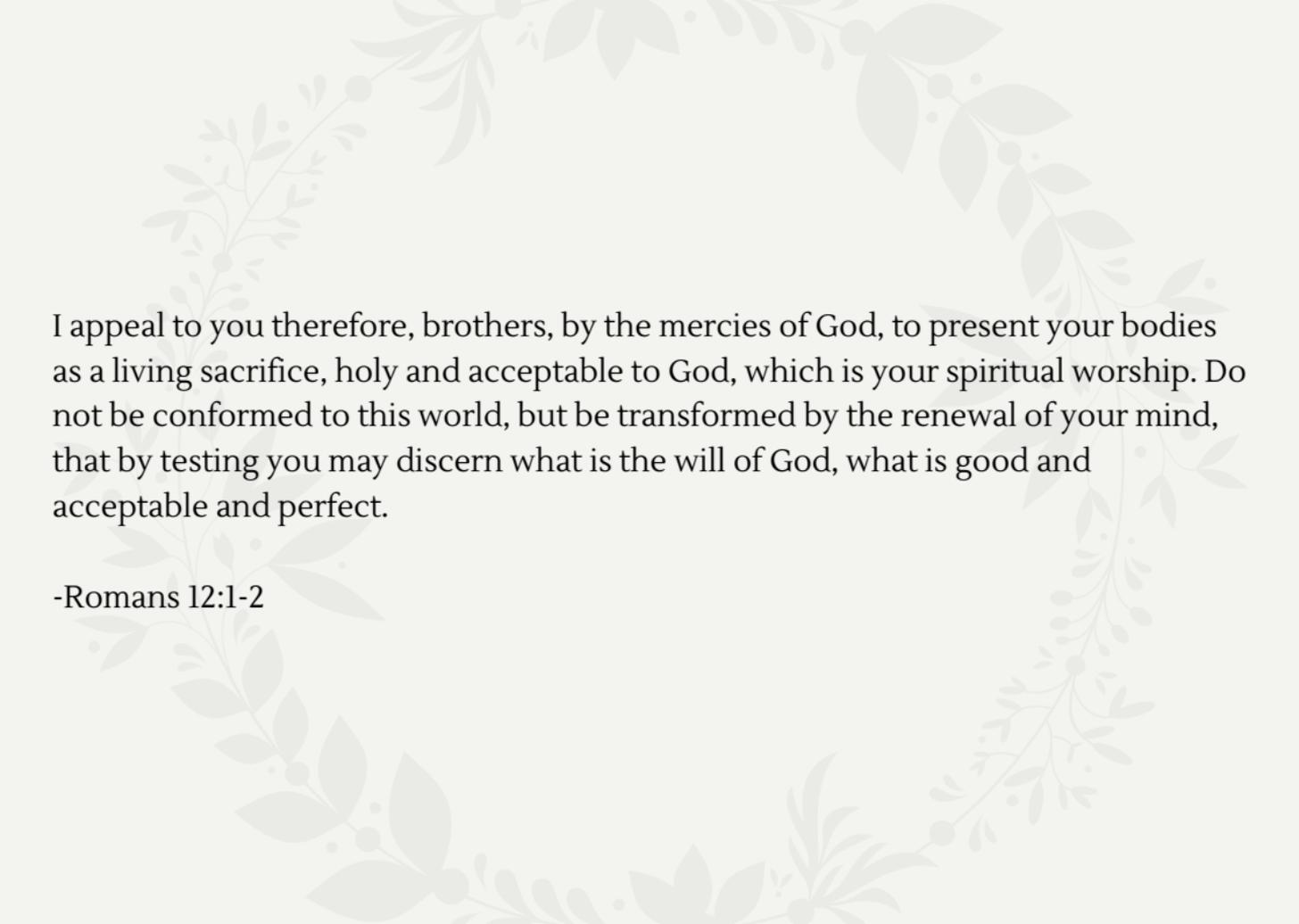
When Christ made the decision to die for you and conquered death through the resurrection, He set in stone who you are and defeated the enemy who would say differently. As Lauren Diagle's beautiful and vulnerable song puts it, "the only thing that matters now is everything you think of me/ in you I find my worth, in you I find my identity." If you are a believer, you are completely free of what you or anyone else has said or thinks about you. You are free from needing the respect of your wife because Jesus Christ has promised you the highest position of authority under Him, as His son. You are free from needing the romantic acts of love from your husband because Jesus Christ adores you as His beloved. And as God's child, you are free to love your spouse sacrificially, to be patient with him/her and show grace in the mistakes because your foundation is steady.

Call to Action: Write out the one or two lies you have believed about your marriage or about who you are as a person. Then look up scripture that combats those lies and write down the truth. What would change in your marriage if you believed the truth?



JESUS' RESURRECTION OFFERS
PURPOSE

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DAY 5
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I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

-Romans 12:1-2

When I first moved to Dallas, I came without a car, a job, or a bed. I did have an apartment and a roommate, but the rest I was waiting on God to provide, call me crazy. One day I got sick and decided to take a few buses to find my doctors office. The bus system in Dallas is not great and that mixed with my innate GPS (sarcasm) had me lost fairly quickly. There I was walking around in some unknown part of town afraid and tired. I just kept walking and walking and not ending up anywhere. When I finally found a place where I could call someone, I found a wall, sank down to the floor and just cried. I was far from home and needed help. Thankfully, my roommate came to the rescue and all ended well.

When I was lost, I was not only afraid, I was confused. I had no idea where I was going and no idea about how to get there. Before Christ, we are all like that. We may have a general idea of how we want to live but really we are lost, wandering proverbial streets, hoping that nothing bad happens. For the believer life is different. Jesus Christ claimed to be “the Way” and established this truth at His resurrection. The Way for our salvation in the future with Him and the Way for us now, to live with the purpose and direction He created for us.

So why do live, work, eat, get married? Why didn't God just snatch us up to Heaven when we became believers? Because He has work for us to do, He has a purpose for us and that purpose includes our marriage. Ephesians 2:10 says we were created to do good works, 1 John 2:6 says we ought to "walk" like Christ, Romans 12:1-2 says for us to be transformed, and of course Matthew 28 says to make disciples. So what is our purpose? To be Holy, like Christ, and to spread the Good News of the Gospel.

What would it look like if your marriage lived out this purpose? What would it look like if you partnered with your spouse in spreading the Good News? What would it look like if you saw everything that happened in your marriage as something that God is using to make you Holy?

Most build their marriage on the purposes of being happy or growing a family. But those goals are temporary and often disappointing. As believers in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, our goals are eternal and satisfying, our God will not disappoint.

Call to Action: Either journal alone or discuss with your spouse what it would look like for your marriage to fulfill His purposes.



Ashley Or

Ashley Or is a licensed professional counselor intern at a private practice in north, Texas. She is an inter- racially married, mother of three young boys, and wife to a pastor of culturally diverse young minds. She has a passion for emotional and mental health, especially in marriage, and thrives in the soul-stirring, dramatic environment that is counseling. Her goal in life is to be a conduit of the Truth and a graceful yet passionate lover of people. When she is not chasing her boys or working, you can find her deep into a baking show or researching her next travel adventure.

*For more on Ashley visit:
www.ashleyorcounseling.com*