

Stay
by
Amy Carroll

*"May your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in you."
Psalm 33:22 (NIV)*

I failed my friend. Although I'd love to tell you how I stuck by her as an encouraging presence and practical helper through her darkest days, it simply wouldn't be true. I didn't understand her choices. I couldn't endorse her actions. I struggled with the consequences, and so I left. I didn't actually go anywhere physically, but I withdrew my availability and my openness. I tucked my heart back into a safe, little box and walked away.

It was years ago, but I still look back on that time with regret and sorrow. Although I've made attempts since to reach out and reconcile, my friend is understandably cautious as she guards her still-smarting heart. I hope one day that our friendship will be fully restored, but until then I've tried to use the consequences of my sin to learn some things. I am desperate to learn to stay.

Stay through conflict.

Stay through struggles.

Stay through suffering.

Stay through discomfort.

Stay through misunderstanding.

Mary Magdalene is such a beautiful example of a constant heart. Because of her great love for Jesus, she stayed.

She stayed after He set her free.

She stayed as He traveled.

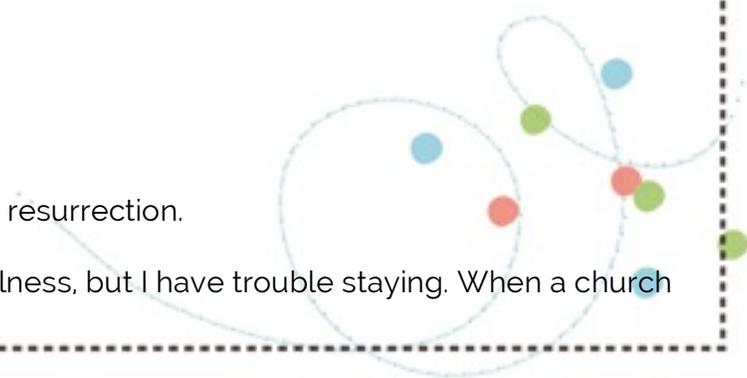
She stayed through His torture.

She stayed at the cross.

She stayed at His burial.

She stayed to pass on the news of His resurrection.

Mary Magdalene is a picture of faithfulness, but I have trouble staying. When a church



doesn't quite fit my desires, I desire a "happier" place. When a friend is going through a bad time because of choices I can't endorse, I tend to withdraw. When God does things I can't understand, I yearn to flee to a more comfortable setting. It seems easier and less painful.

Come Thou Fount is my favorite hymn, and I think it's because this verse resounds so loudly with me:

O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!
Let thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for thy courts above.

I want to leave sometimes, but I *long* to learn to stay. I long to learn an abiding love for God, my family and my friends that extends a grace beyond my own strength--a strength from One who never leaves and is teaching me to stay.

Dear Lord, sometimes it's not easy to stay when conflict, disagreements or differences get in the way. Would you give me the power to love people unconditionally and the wisdom to know how to love them well? In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Application Steps:

Read the Psalms and reflect on God's faithfulness and steadfastness.

Pray that God would weave His constant character into yours.

Reflections:

Are there times that I can think of when I fled instead of staying?

Would God have me go back a begin to make amends for those times?

Power Verses:

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

Deuteronomy 31:8, "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." (NIV)

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