



The Messenger: Eight Keys for Resurrecting Your Life

Mialena Zachary

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The Messenger is an eye-opening spiritual book that invites a search for personal truth.

Mialena Zachary's *The Messenger* is a broad-reaching spiritual self-help book inspired by the Bible.

The book reimagines, through diligent study, the narrative of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. It also aims to echo Thomas Jefferson's respect for Jesus's teachings without worshiping Jesus. The approach to the story, in its research and telling, is reverent toward, but untethered to, traditional views of the Bible. In fact, in addition to studying nine different versions of the Bible, Zachary studied and utilized texts from the Nag Hammadi codices, the Tao Te Ching, and the Bhagavad Gita. The result is a compelling story of universal truth that finds its fulfillment in love.

Partially retelling Jesus's biography, beginning with John the Baptist and ending with Jesus's followers' response to his death, the book reimagines familiar biblical passages in ways that are stretching and challenging, with the ultimate goal of inviting new insights. For example, the Lord's Prayer here begins: "Perfectly complete Father-Mother, who are in the eternally present heavens; may your names be sanctified." The aim is to unsettle typical notions of religiosity, opening the way for a new, inclusive way of looking.

Gender is a key exploration of the book. Beginning with the belief that Jesus and Mary Magdalene "embodied the necessary balance of sacred masculine and divine feminine energies," it renames the Holy Spirit "Sofia," making what's ethereal feel more personal and more feminine. The book uses gender-neutral wording, too, opting to address "humanity," instead of "mankind." The ultimate goal of this gender exploration is balance and unity, recognizing the beauty of gender along with the flawed ways it's been manipulated.

The book's eight keys for change follow Jesus and Mary Magdalene's story, which takes up the bulk of the book; but because they are secondary to the story, they feel like an afterthought at times, even though they are significant to the impact of the story. They include presence, service, and compassion; rather than being prescriptive, they are suggested as a source of individual guidance. Each key is complemented by brief questions and references to the text to deepen exploration.

The book finds its roots in Zachary's personal connection to Mary Magdalene, as a woman who was "lost and unfulfilled." This provides a relatable resonance point for others to enter the story. Indeed, it's designed as a story to be shared; it includes book club questions and other invitations to read, reread, and read with others, as well as instructions for Lectio Divina, a traditional contemplative reading, that can be done alone or with others.

While imagination is a striking feature of the book, what stands out most is its research. The book explains in-depth its choices in Hebrew translation and word choice. There are pages of end notes, organized by chapter, with references to biblical sources and other sacred texts. Footnotes give definitions, Greek word origins, and background information. The book has a format similar to the Bible and other sacred texts: its lines are numbered, and the words attributed to God are in blue. In addition, there are other reader-friendly elements, including a list of people in the front of the book

with their name in the text (Hebrew origin), their familiar English name, and a biographical phrase. There's a similar list for places.

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MELISSA WUSKE (October 15, 2021)

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