

MARY MAGDALENE: A FAITHFUL DISCIPLE

Bible Background – MARK 15:40; 16:1-9; LUKE 8:1-3; JOHN 20:10-18

Printed Text – LUKE 8:1-3; MARK 15:40; JOHN 20:10-18

Women Who Followed Jesus

JOHN 8 ¹Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him,

²along with some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.

³Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing from their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples.

MARK 15 ⁴⁰Some women were there, watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James the younger and of Joseph), and Salome.

JOHN 20 ¹⁰Then they went home.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in.

¹²She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying.

¹³“Dear woman, why are you crying?” the angels asked her. “Because they have taken away my Lord,” she replied, “and I don't know where they have put him.”

¹⁴She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him.

¹⁵“Dear woman, why are you crying?” Jesus asked her. “Who are you looking for?” She thought he was the gardener. “Sir,” she said, “if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him.”

¹⁶“Mary!” Jesus said. She turned to him and cried out, “Rabboni!” (which is Hebrew for “Teacher”).

¹⁷“Don't cling to me,” Jesus said, “for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

¹⁸Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, “I have seen the Lord!” Then she gave them his message.

-----New Living Translation

Lesson Introduction

Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus' very devoted disciples. Although, not one of the twelve, she was recorded in the Gospels to have been present during the most pivotal times of Jesus' ministry. In this lesson we will study to understand her motivations for committing her life to Jesus. We will also understand the sacrifices Mary Magdalene made in order to follow Jesus. Through this study, we hope to learn the importance of embracing a lifestyle of wholehearted discipleship.

Background: Although some traditions have historically advanced the idea that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute, more recent Biblical scholars have debunked that claim because Scripture does not support it. Possibly the link began with scholars assuming Mary Magdalene (who is first named in Luke 8:2) is the same "sinful woman" who anointed Jesus in Simon's house (Luke 7). In Luke 8:2, what we really learn about Mary Magdalene is that she was a woman from whom seven demons had gone out and she was a close follower and friend of Jesus. In Mark 15:40 we learn that when Jesus was crucified, Mary was among the group of women who looked on from a distance. When the Sabbath was over, she was also one of the three women who brought spices to anoint Jesus' body. Mary's consistent presence with Jesus and His appearance to her after His Resurrection points to the value Jesus placed on the contributions of women to the spread of the Gospel.

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 280

The Twelve and Some Women

Luke 8:1-3: In Luke 7:36-50, it is recorded that Jesus accepted a dinner invitation to the home of Simon, a Pharisee, where Jesus taught a great lesson about forgiveness and demonstrated His power to forgive sins. He also cautioned Simon to have a heart of love, worship and humble submission. He ministered to those present and continued His mission in Chapter 8 by proclaiming the Gospel. He continued traveling, preaching and revealing himself to be the Messiah. The phrases "shewing the glad tidings (KJV)" or "announcing the Good News (NLT)" are both translated from a single Greek word, *euaggelo*, from which we get the English word evangelize. It means that the Christ had come and anyone who believed in Him would receive eternal life as God's child.

As He traveled, Jesus' inner circle of twelve disciples traveled with Him and certain women were there who were also devoted followers. These women had been healed of demons and diseases and were specifically named and worthy of mention in scripture: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna. They also supported His ministry out of their personal resources. These women, of some considerable means, were devoted to Jesus; and Joanna, the wife of a high-ranking official in King Herod's court, no doubt took considerable risks in her support of Jesus' ministry. Her husband worked for Herod Antipas, who had John the Baptist beheaded (Luke 3:19-20).

But the most prominent of the women named was Mary Magdalene. Each of the four Gospels place her at the Cross, burial and the Resurrection of our Savior. Mary was, as it is today, a quite common name in Biblical times. Magdalene probably indicates that she came from Magdala, a town in Galilee. Mary is very devoted to Jesus and from her, we learn that He cast out seven demons. Experiencing such a deliverance at Jesus' hands certainly helps us to understand the transformative impact the Lord had on

February 14, 2021- Study Guide 11

her life. What faith, love and devotion to Him must have grown from such an experience! Although tradition implies that Mary was a prostitute, there is nothing specific in scriptures that state this. We can only assume that she is a woman of some material substance, with no husband and whose life was impacted greatly by her encounters with Jesus. Because of her devotion, she felt compelled to support His ministry in any way that she could.

◆ *What unique resources do you provide to contribute to ongoing Christian ministry?*

Refusing to Leave the Scene

Mark 15:40: Mark identifies women who witnessed Jesus' execution on the Cross from a distance. They were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the lesser and Joseph, and Salome. This, too, indicates the significant role women played in the life of Christ and the support of His ministry. Just as today: women make up the majority of protestant congregations and are crucially active in ministry. The Crucifixion was meant to be a humiliating execution and normally, the shame would make others shun the event. Also, the fear of being known to associate with one who was a supposed threat to the Roman Empire would frighten others, but these women stayed. They may not have been at the foot of the Cross like John and Mary, Jesus' mother, but they remained with their Master through His death.

◆ *When was the last time you supported someone or something until the end even knowing that you would not receive the result for which you had hoped and prayed?*

Looking for Signs of Resurrection

John 20:10-18: Upon seeing the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene ran to tell the disciples. Peter and John came to see for themselves then returned home. But Mary remained at the gravesite weeping, overcome with grief. She was so distraught and in such despair: perhaps this is the reason she was not alarmed by the angels who spoke to her from the tomb nor did she recognize Jesus when He spoke to her. But He revealed Himself to her when He was ready. Jesus shows Himself to those who earnestly seek Him. But in an instant she went from mourning to jubilation. Mary Magdalene had a heart that sincerely yearned to find Jesus and He spoke to her.

Conclusion

What a privilege for Mary Magdalene to be the one to deliver Jesus' message to the disciples, one that she received from the Lord in person! She was healed by Jesus; traveled with Him and supported His ministry, witnessed His Crucifixion; and witnessed His Resurrection. Because of her faithfulness and devotion, Jesus gave Her unique experiences that transformed her. All believers should see her as an example of a devoted follower whose entire lifestyle exemplifies wholehearted discipleship.

Sources:

Banks, M. (Ed.). (2020). Call in the New Testament. *Precepts for Living*, 23(Winter Quarter), 276-287. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.
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February 14, 2021- Study Guide 11

Lesson for Next Week – February 21, 2021 – Study Guide 12

PRISCILLA: CALLED TO MINISTER

Bible Background ♦ ACTS 18:1-26; ROMANS 16:3-4; 1 CORINTHIANS 16:19.
2 TIMOTHY 4:19

Printed Text ♦ ACTS 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; ROMANS 16:3-4

Devotional Reading ♦ COLOSSIAN 4:7-15

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Paul Reflects on His Ministry
(2 Timothy 4:9-18)

TUESDAY

Greetings to Saints in Jesus Christ
(Colossians 4:7-15)

WEDNESDAY

The Holy Kiss strengthens Ministry Bond
(2 Corinthians 13:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28)

THURSDAY

Ministry Shifts from Jews to Gentiles
(Acts 18:4-11)

FRIDAY

Roman Official Refuses to Settle Dispute
(Acts 18:12-17)

SATURDAY

Greetings to All Sisters in Ministry
(Romans 16:1-2, 6-7,12-13, 16)

SUNDAY

Priscilla, Key Outreach Minister
(Acts 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; Romans 16:3-4)