



MARY MAGDALENE

LEADER'S
GUIDE



WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

LESSON 3

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THE PATTERN OF A CHANGED LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Mary Magdalene is one of the best known and yet least understood of all the women in the New Testament. She is mentioned in all four gospels, mostly in connection with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Luke was the first to mention Mary Magdalene in Scripture. She was a leader among the other women, and she was given the unique distinction of being the first to see Christ after he arose from the grave. For God to give her that honor, shows Jesus' high respect for women. Mary is a shining example of how God can use a transformed life.

BACKGROUND

1. The name Mary comes from the Hebrew language and its original root meaning means bitterness derived from the notion of trouble, sorrow, disobedience and rebellion. Before Mary met Jesus, she lived a life of extreme suffering and great affliction which, at times, literally consumed her entire being.
2. Scriptures tell us that Mary was a woman possessed with seven demons. This demonstrates the *extreme* affliction she endured under demonic possession. The Scriptures is silent in how she became possessed but she suffered greatly having multiple demons inside of her. One demon is enough but to have seven devils indwelling in one body shows the severity and intensity of her suffering.
3. Mary is distinguished from all the other Marys mentioned in the Bible because she is called by the name of her birthplace Magdala. Therefore, Mary is known as Mary of Magdala or Mary Magdalene. She grew up near the western bank of the Sea of Galilee, about 3 miles from the town of Capernaum. Magdala means watchtower and probably was named for the tower that guarded the city. Magdala was a famous, ancient city known for its dye work and woolen textures. It was also city known for its trade, shipbuilding, fishing, fish curing and agriculture. Magdala was a wealthy and populated city.
4. Magdala and the cities around the Sea of Galilee were known to have demonic activity. In fact, Jesus performed a number of exorcisms in and around the Sea of Galilee. It was a hotbed for this type of activity. Although the Scriptures is silent in how Mary met Jesus, no doubt, it was probably in this area. The reality is she did meet Jesus and He changed her life.
5. There is no record of Mary's parents, her marital status or how old she was. What we do know is that she was free to follow Jesus in his travels. Therefore, we can conclude that she had no obligations at home to hinder her at that time. Scripture says nothing about her physical appearance but once Jesus healed her, her life became a beautiful picture of utter devotion and complete surrender to her Savior Jesus Christ. If one verse could describe Mary's life it would be 2 Cor. 5:17.

6. Mary Magdalene is often wrongly linked to her being a prostitute. No where in Scripture does the Word of God say Mary was ever a woman of loose morals, only a woman possessed with seven demons [Luke 8:2]. Neither the gospels nor the early Church Fathers connected Mary with a bad reputation. To connect Mary with immoral behavior just because she was possessed with demons is unfair and unscriptural. During the Middle Ages, a lot of false heresies [having no biblical basis] were taught about her. More recently, *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown suggests that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were secretly married and even had children. NOT TRUE!
7. One of the misconceptions about Mary Magdalene being a prostitute is some try to link her with the biblical account of the “sinful woman” found in Luke 7:37-39; 47-48; 50. These two women are completely two different women. This connection between these two women is not possible for Scriptures clearly shows that Jesus did not cast any demons out of this sinful woman in this account in chapter of Luke. We need to be careful to search the Scriptures ourselves to see what God has to say and not to rely on the traditions of men [2 Tim.2:15].
8. Demon possession involves bondage to an evil spirit and in Mary’s case, there were seven demons which were extremely severe. Demon possession is portrayed as an affliction not a sin. Demon possessed people suffer miserably under a demonic control and were considered outcasts of human society —usually restless, joyless and hopeless individuals [Matt. 17:15-16]. Demon possessed people never came to Christ. They were either brought to Jesus or He went to them [Matt. 8:16].

MARY’S ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST:

9. With seven demons controlling her body, Mary must have looked pretty pathetic to Jesus. Her body racked with affliction and her mind controlled by these demonic beings, her life must have seemed pretty hopeless to her. No doubt, Jesus looked on her with compassion and healed her affliction. Mary’s life was not only reformed but her life was transformed Mary was no longer a prisoner of her own body. Why? Because Jesus, the Son of God, came to destroy the works of the devil [1 John 3:8].
10. Although Scripture does not tell us about her initial meeting with Jesus, the fact is she did meet Him and He changed her life forever. She believed that Jesus was the Son of God. We know from God’s Word that she made Him the Master of her life for in John 20:16, Mary calls Jesus, “Rabboni” which means master. Mary saw firsthand that the demonic beings that controlled her body for so long were no match for Jesus [Luke 8:2].

11. Mary became a devoted disciple of Christ

- A. She followed Jesus — Mary wasted no time to travel with Jesus, his disciples and other women throughout the region of Galilee to Jerusalem [Mark 15:40-41]. She was part of Jesus' inner circle of disciples. She probably joined Jesus in the later part of His ministry. She witnessed the miracles of Christ and she not only saw His power, but she was a product of God's miraculous healing herself. Mary's heart was one of love, loyalty and service for her Redeemer. Although some want to link Mary to having a romantic relationship with Christ, nowhere in Scripture does it ever suggest such a relationship nor was this a narrative advanced by the Early Church Fathers. Even Jesus' enemies and critics never accused Jesus nor Mary of immoral behavior.
- B. She ministered to Jesus — Mary and the women who travelled with Jesus, no doubt, prepared meals, provided clothing and took care of the general welfare of Christ and His followers. These women were focused in taking care of Jesus and His disciples' everyday needs so God's work could be accomplished through them [Luke 8:1-3].
- C. Mary gave financially to Jesus — Mary was evidently a woman of sufficient wealth to be able to travel and support the ministry of Christ like she did. Scripture is silent in how she obtained her wealth. She could have been born to a wealthy family or she could have been connected to one of the many industries in her hometown. Magdala was a thriving, populated area [Luke 8:3].

THE PATTERN OF A COMMITTED LIFE:

12. Mary Magdalene was a leader among women. Mary of Magdala is mentioned 14 times in Scripture. Eight times she is mentioned in connection with other women in which her name is always mentioned first—denoting leadership [Mark 15:40; Luke 24:10]. Only in John 19:25, is Mary Magdalene mentioned last. Once a woman possessed with demons, she now is seen as a woman who had the respect and admiration of all the women around her.

13. Mary was loyal to the end:

- A. The death of Christ — Mary displayed rare courage at the crucifixion of Christ. At first, she is seen beholding the crucifixion from afar [Matt. 27:55-56]. Next, she is seen at the foot of the cross along side Mary, Christ's mother and His aunt [John 19:25]. No doubt her loved and sympathy for her Master drew her closer. All the other disciples, except for John, were scattered as sheep and fled for

their lives when Christ died on the cross. However, Mary remained faithful even at the risk of her own life.

B. The burial of Christ — Mary and another woman named Mary saw where Jesus' body was laid. Joseph of Arimathaea placed Jesus' body in his new tomb, and Mary witnessed the stone being rolled up to the door of the sepulcher [Mark 15:47]. Mary so loved her Master that it was hard for her to leave the One who did so much for her. It was after she left the tomb that Mary immediately went with the other women to buy spices to anoint Jesus' body on Sunday morning [Mark 16:1]. They had to get them before the Sabbath began.

C. The resurrection of Christ

1) Mary was the last at the cross and the first at the tomb [Luke 23:55-56; John 20:1]. Since Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus [John 19:38-42] prepared Jesus' body hastily before the Sabbath, Mary and the other women wanted to make sure Jesus' body was properly anointed with the spices for His burial. They planned to come back on Sunday morning. How were these women going to move the stone? To their surprise the stone was moved and the sepulcher was open. Mary left the other women and immediately ran to tell the disciples the stone was moved [John 20:1-2].

2) John and Peter ran to the tomb without delay [John 20:3-6; 10]. After they looked inside the tomb and saw that it was empty, they left. Mary who followed the disciples back to the tomb, stayed behind sobbing and wondering "where did they take my Lord." She was crying profusely. The pain of losing the One who made her life whole — dying such a disgraceful and excruciating death—was more than Mary could bear. Now Jesus' body was gone. How devastating!

3) Mary had to look in the tomb for herself. Jesus' body was not there.

a. She saw angels — As she looked in the tomb, she saw two angels [John 20:11-13]. Interestingly, they appeared to Mary but did not appear to Peter and John. As she talked with the angels, she didn't appear to be afraid.

b. She saw a man — As she talked with the angels, she turned and saw someone who she thought was the gardener [John 20:14-16]. As she conversed with him, Jesus said her name, "Mary." Immediately she recognized the loving voice of her Master. Can you imagine the emotions

that went through her when she realized it was Jesus and He was alive? She went to the tomb with deep sorrow and left with exceeding joy. Immediately, Mary wanted to touch Him but Jesus lovingly admonished her for He had to ascend to His Father [John 20:17].

- c. She ran to the disciples again — This time she told them what happened at the tomb — her encounter with Jesus and what He said to her [John 20:18]. It was Mary not the disciples that was given the distinction of seeing the Risen Lord first — an unusual yet an amazing privilege given to a woman in biblical times and yet, all four of the Gospel writers recorded this important fact regarding Mary of Magdala. Jesus not only healed many women in His earthly ministry but He used their help in the furtherance of the Gospel . He had a high respect for women and the important part they played in God’s overall plan.

CONCLUSION:

Mary Magdalene was a woman whose life was a pattern of her love and devotion to Jesus Christ. From the moment she met Jesus, her life was forever changed and her loyalty to her Savior never wavered. She exhibited singleness of purpose, strength of will and courage in the face of danger. She was a leader among women, respected by all the women around her. She used all her earthly possessions to further the cause of Christ. God is still today in the business of making ashes into beauty. May Mary’s devotion and faithfulness to Christ be a example to all of us today.