

Mary Magdalene:
The Woman Who Had Seven Devils
 Or
The Woman That No One Remembers Correctly

*We ought to love our Maker for His own sake,
 without either hope of good or fear of pain.*

~Cervantes (4)

Read Her Story:	Matthew 27:56, 61; 28:1; Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1-19; Luke 8:2; 24:1-12; John 19:25; 20:1-18
Questions to ask yourself as you do this study:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Why do you think Mary Magdalene is often remembered as a former prostitute who followed Jesus? 2. Why do you think Mary is the primary witness in every key aspect of Jesus' final months of ministry? 3. What does Jesus' behavior towards Mary and her discipleship say about the role of women in the church today? 4. What do you think most pleased God about Mary Magdalene?

Her Name	Her name may mean "Bitterness"
Her Time In History	A.D. 30 (32)
Her Key Scriptures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recipient of great salvation: Luke 8:2, • Showed her gratitude to Christ by ministering to Him: Mark 15:40-41, • Showed her gratitude by her presence at the cross: John 19:25, • Showed her gratitude by her presence at the grave: Matthew 27:61, 28:1, • First to see Christ after resurrection: Mark 16:9, • Given a wonderful revelation: John 20:11-18 (26)
Her Promises In Scripture	Isaiah 43:1, Matthew 10:29-31, Romans 8:39, I Peter 5:7

Can You Fill In The Blanks?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The life of Mary Magdalene is a most vivid example of what Jesus can do for a _____. Her story begins with the darkest of all human _____ and ends with the most glorious day in the history of the _____. 2. Jesus broke the _____ in His relationship with _____.
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Answers at the end of the study.

JESUS AND WOMEN
Follow the Fascinating Trail!!

- ❖ **First Person To Know That He Was Coming:** Mary (Luke 1:30-32)
- ❖ **First Person To Profess Faith In Him:** Elizabeth (Luke 1:42-43)
- ❖ **First Person To Proclaim Him to the World:** Anna (Luke 2:36-38)
- ❖ **Longest Recorded Conversation Between Jesus and a Person:** The Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-42)
- ❖ **First Person That Jesus Reveals His True Identity As The Messiah To:** The Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-42)
- ❖ **First Person To Anoint Christ:** The Sinful Woman (Luke 7:36-50)
- ❖ **First Person To Be Healed Through Touching Christ:** The Woman With The Issue of Blood (Matt 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48)
- ❖ **Earthly Home/Place of Rest for Jesus:** Martha of Bethany's home (Luke 10:38-42)
- ❖ **First Person to Express Knowledge/Sorrow of Jesus' Impending Death:** Mary of Bethany (Mark 14:7-8)
- ❖ **Only Person Christ Pronounced Immortal Fame Over Because Of A Specific Deed:** Mary of Bethany and her anointing of Christ (Mark 14:3-9)
- ❖ **People Who Financially Supported Jesus During His Ministry:** Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Susanna, "and many others" (Luke 8:3)
- ❖ **Person Mentioned Most Often In Scriptures, Besides Twelve Disciples:** Mary Magdalene
- ❖ **Witnesses of Christ's Death/Present at The Crucifixion:** Mary (Mother of Jesus), Mary Magdalene, Salome (Zebedee's wife and the mother of James and John), Mary (The wife of Cleopas and mother of James the younger and Joseph), John the disciple (John 19:25)
- ❖ **Only Person At Every Scene Related To Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection:** Mary Magdalene
- ❖ **First Person The Risen Jesus Christ Appeared To and Spoke To:** Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9, John 20:11-18)
- ❖ **First People To Know Of The Resurrection:** Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James (Luke 24:1-10)
- ❖ **First Person To Be Told By Christ To Herald the Resurrection:** Mary Magdalene (John 20:17)
- ❖ **First Human Heralds of the Resurrection:** Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James (Luke 24:1-10)

Mary Magdalene compared to Peter (32)

Mary	Peter
Kept the same name after meeting Jesus.	Given a new name after meeting Jesus. (Mark 3:16, Luke 6:14, John 1:42).
Saw the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40, John 19:25).	Saw the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17:1-4, Mark 9:2-6, Luke 9:28-36).

Heard Jesus' voice cry that His Father God had forsaken Him (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34)	Heard God's voice from Heaven proclaim His Son, Jesus (Matt. 17:5, Mark 9:7, Luke 9:35).
Delivered of seven demons ((Luke 8:2).	Asked Jesus if he must forgive seven times (Matt. 18:21).
Provided for Jesus as she followed Him. (Luke 8:1-3)	Told Jesus he had left everything to follow Him (Matt. 19:27, Mark 10:28, Luke 18:28).
Stood in the Garden watching and weeping for Jesus without being asked (John 20:11-17, Mark 16:9).	Slept in the Garden after Jesus asked him to watch and pray with Him (Marr. 26:37-46, Mark 14:33-42).
Proclaimed Jesus risen to the disciples (Luke 23:10, John 20:18.	Denied Jesus to strangers (Matt. 26:58-75; Mark 14:54-72, Luke 22:54-62, John 18:15-27).
Remained near the cross (Matt. 27:56, Mark 15:40, John 19:25).	Fled from the cross (Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:27-29)
Given a message by Jesus (Luke 24:10, John 20:18).	Sent a message from Jesus (Mark 16:7).
Remained at the empty tomb, the last place she saw Jesus, and had had an encounter with Him (John 20:11-17), Mark 16:9).	Left the empty tomb without understanding (John 20:6-10).

Her Background, Life and Times

Jesus and Women: Cooking, caring for family members, spinning, weaving, sewing, baking bread, cleaning – all of these were common tasks for women in New Testament times. Most women spent the majority of their time and energy within their homes, caring for their families. But several women stepped outside the cultural expectations of their time to play a significant role in the ministry of Jesus. Only the twelve disciples are mentioned more often than certain women, Mary Magdalene being one of them. Mark tells us that a number of women “followed him [Jesus] and cared for his needs” (Mark 15:41). During the years of Jesus’ ministry, when he and his disciples weren’t earning an income, several women stepped in to care for them. They used their own financial resources to support Jesus and the disciples (Luke 8:3). While Jesus was teaching and healing, these women probably spent their time purchasing food, preparing it, and serving it. Perhaps they also found homes for Jesus and his disciples to stay in while on their travels. These particular women probably either didn’t have children or had children who were grown, so their responsibilities at home were decreased, and they could instead provide for the needs of Jesus and his disciples. Two women in Bethany, Mary and Martha, were close enough to Jesus that he called them his friends (John 11:11). Luke’s gospel in particular portrays Jesus as someone who both understood and respected women, conferring on them a stature that most of them had not previously enjoyed. Jesus’ dealings with women throughout the Gospels gives all of us, men and women alike, a

model to follow as we consider the status and treatment of the women with whom we come into contact every day. (1)

Family Obligations: We have no record of Mary's parentage, her marital status or her age. That she was free to follow Jesus in his journeyings would suggest that she had no home obligations. (2)

Mary Who: She was called Mary Magdalene to distinguish her from the others, who were Mary the wife of Cleopas, Mary the sister of Martha, Mary the mother of Mark and Mary the mother of Jesus. An ugly stigma has been attached to her name from earliest times when she became known as the reclaimed courtesan, or the fallen woman redeemed to sainthood. This is due to the unfair identification of Mary with the sinful woman who anointed the feet of Jesus in Simon's house (Luke 7:36-50). (3)

Magdala: a small town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. (3)

Magdala: Mary's natal town, was situated about three miles from Capernaum. (17)

Seven Demons: Seven is a mystic number suggesting "completeness," implying that when the evil spirits dominated Mary the suffering was extremely severe. (2)

Demon Possession: Was prevalent in Jesus' day, especially in the area of Gadara, which was not far from Magdala. It seemed that all the forces of hell were let loose to raise havoc where the Redeemer of the world walked among men. There was uncontrolled hate and evil in the human heart. Satan personally did his utmost to turn Jesus aside from His purpose, and his Legions entered into many people to drive them into illness, paroxysms and insanity. (3)

Her Character

Mentally Ill: Though mistakenly characterized as a prostitute in many popular writings, the Bible says only that Mary was possessed by seven demons. She probably suffered serious mental illness from which Jesus delivered her. She is a beautiful example of a woman whose life was poured out in response to God's extravagant grace. (1)

Demon Possessed: She was released from the torture of seven devils (also see Mark 16:9). She was not vexed as the daughter of the Syro-Phoenician woman was, but was completely controlled by demons. (3)

Healed: That she was deeply grateful for physical and mental healing is shown by what she endeavored to do for her Deliverer and His cause. (2)

Disciple: Healed, Mary became a disciple. (2)

Faithful: However hopeless Mary may have felt, she remained faithful to the end. How her faith was rewarded! Mary was among the first to hear of Jesus' resurrection, and she was *the* first to see and speak to the risen Lord. It is forever stamped on the pages of sacred history that it was not a man, but Mary, who was granted this great privilege. We can hardly doubt that Mary Magdalene, although overlooked by many who stress the roles of Peter and John, was among the most faithful and honored disciples of Jesus Christ. (32)

Not a Loner: Mary Magdalene was not a "loner." With but one exception, she is always seen in company with others. (32)

Steadfast: When the Gospel writers listed those who witnessed Jesus' crucifixion, the only man mentioned was John. Yet a number of women – among whom were Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene – were featured. The experience in the Garden had demoralized the male disciples, and they had fled from Gethsemane. The specific mention of named women reminds us that the women held fast to Jesus and would not let Him go to His death alone. Despite the pain they felt, despite their doubts and fears, Mary Magdalene and the others were there for their Lord. (32)

Loyal: Mary's unstinted and unusual loyalty knew no bounds. Even though all the disciples, but one, had hidden in terror, she and the other women followed the cross with the hissing mob through the appointed gate to Golgotha. There, in the fringe of the crowd the women huddled (Matthew 27:55,56), shaking with quiet sobs. (3)

Brave: Despite the well known threat of the Pharisees to expel Jesus' followers from the synagogue, and thus from any access to aid should they be in need, Mary and her friends openly identified with Jesus, standing near the cross and waiting by the garden tomb. (32)

First: She is mentioned fourteen times in the gospels, and from references to her we can see clearly what she did and how she did it. A striking feature in eight of the fourteen passages is that Mary is name in connection with other women, but she always heads the list, implying that she occupied the place at the front in service rendered by godly females. (2)

Present: Mary was present in Pilate's hall and saw and heard the religious leaders clamoring for the blood of Him who was so precious to her heart. She listened as Pontius Pilate pronounced His death sentence of crucifixion although he had found no fault in Him. She witnessed and wept as Jesus left the hall to be spat upon and ill-treated by the crowd thirsting for his blood. Then she saw Him led out to Calvary's fatal mount to be nailed to a tree. She was one of the sorrowing group of holy women who stood as near as they could to comfort Jesus by their presence in the closing agonies of the crucifixion (Luke 23:49). Mary listened with a broken heart to His bitter cries and watched through those dread hours until at last the Roman soldier thrust his spear into the Savior's side and declared Him dead. She assisted Joseph and Nicodemus in receiving the battered body from the tree, preparing it for burial, then placing the precious remains in the new tomb in the garden. She was the first in the garden tomb to witness the most important event in the world history and the pivotal truth of Christianity, namely the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and she was the first among men or women to see the Risen Lord, and to receive the first message from his lips (John 20:18). (2)

She Did and Saw Everything: She saw the soldiers mock Jesus. She waited by the cross to the end. She assisted Joseph and Nicodemus take down the cross, release and wash the body of the Savior. She went to the grave and watched intently as the men laid Jesus on a bed of spices. She kept the Sabbath. In the early morning while it was still dark she went to the tomb with a few other women. She was the first to see the empty tomb. She was the one who ran to get Peter and John and came back with them. She stayed by the tomb weeping after the men left to tell the others. She saw two angels. She was the first to see

the resurrected Lord. She was the first person to be commissioned by Christ to herald the resurrection. (3)

The Witness: Mary of Magdala – the main witness mentioned at the Lord’s tomb on Resurrection morning, the woman who lingered behind after the apostle’s departure, the first person to greet Jesus after the Crucifixion – was commissioned by the Lord Himself (and earlier, by direct command of the angels) to carry the astounding announcement to His disciples. In all four Gospels, Mary is the only one placed at every scene related to Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. Her faithful witness as the primary proclaimer of Jesus’ message is not to be missed. It was not just that she saw and heard these things; she was also commissioned by the Lord to tell others the news. What an incredible testimony? Mary’s story, so full of courage and commitment to God’s son, is worth remembering regularly. But let us also honor her for enduring the joyless agony of the Cross, staying with Joseph and Nicodemus as they wrapped the Lord’s body, and keeping her tear-soaked watch at Jesus; tomb. For Mary, God’s grace of brokenness was part of the glory of that golden Resurrection morning: The gift of contrition cleared the way for Mary’s faith to find its highest joy. (Debra Evans) (4)

Servant: She constantly remained with the women who followed Jesus and His disciples, and who served him with the necessities they had taken with them. (17)

Well To Do: Jesus’ twelve disciples had left their occupations to join Christ in His ministry. Luke tells us that it was primarily women who provided funds to buy food and other necessities. Early Jewish literature makes it clear that well-to-do women were frequent contributors to well-known rabbis and their students. Rather than being paid to teach, Jewish rabbis were often responsible to feed and house their students. Mary Magdalene was apparently well to do. She was so committed to Jesus that she not only followed Him as a disciple herself, but she also helped support His other disciples. (32).

Her Sorrow

Demonic Possession: While the New Testament frequently mentioned possession or oppression by demonic beings, we are not told how demons obtain a grip on a human being. It is clear from Scripture that those who engage in occult practices are particularly vulnerable, but we are not told whether some choice of the person involved is necessary before demons can gain access to the personality. Possibly the most suggestive New Testament passages on this theme are Matthew 12:43-45 and Luke 11:24-26. Each records Jesus’ warning about unclean or evil spirits. Jesus spoke of such a spirit going out of a man and then returning to find his life “empty, swept, and put in order” (Matthew 12:44). The evil spirit then enters with “seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there” (Matthew 12:45). The key words are “empty, swept, and put in order.” The individual described has done his best to put his life in order, but he himself is empty. There is no presence of God to fill the inner life. Without God’s presence, the individual is vulnerable to other spiritual beings. Whatever led to Mary’s demonization, when she met Jesus she was firmly in the grip of evil spirits. However, the most powerful evil spirits are powerless against the Son of God, and Jesus cast them from her. (32)

Witness the Crucifixion: To watch Jesus' agony at Calvary (1)

Not Believed: Mary was mentioned first when Luke listed the messengers who hurried to the apostles – and her words were dismissed as “idle tales” (Luke 24:11) by the men. That the disciples did not believe Mary should not be attributed to the fact that she was a woman. The disciple Thomas, nicknamed “Doubting” Thomas, did not believe the other ten male disciples when they announced that they, too, had seen Jesus after the resurrection. It was not the reliability of the witnesses that caused doubt; rather, it was the incredible nature of the news they bore. (32)

Her Joy

Witness the Resurrection: To have been the first witness to the Resurrection. (1)

Relationship with Jesus: Once freed by Jesus, Mary no longer was an empty being. Her whole life was redirected toward Jesus. (32)

Jesus' Disciple: Luke notes (Luke 8:1-2) that “He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God” and adds that “the twelve were with him, and certain women.” Here Luke specifically names Mary Magdalene, as well as Joanna and Susana “and many others.” To think of women as disciples in training for leadership violated Jewish custom, but Jesus broke the mold in His relationship with women. Women most certainly were among His disciples.

Commissioned: Mary Magdalene was commissioned twice. First, she and the other women who came to the tomb that first Easter morning were told by angels to “go quickly and tell his disciples” ((Matthew 28:7). This they did. Mary Magdalene returned to the garden tomb. Both Mark and John credited Mary with being the first to see the risen Jesus (Mark 16:9; John 20:14). Even more, Mary was the first one to give witness to the resurrection, for she “came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her” (John 20:18). The reaction of others to Mary's news does nothing to change the fact that she was chosen to be among the first to hear God's good news and the very first to see and speak to the risen Lord. (32)

Her Promises, Her Lessons, Her Legacy

Jesus Knows: Jesus not only knew Mary's name, he knew everything about her. He remembered the day he had cast the demons out of her. He remembered her many practical kindnesses. He saw how she suffered with him as she watched him die on the cross. Just as Jesus knew the intimate details of Mary's life, he knows the same about each of us. When you are tempted to lose hope, when life seems too empty to go on, when grief overwhelms you – Jesus cares. When those you love have let you down, when you think you can't go on for another minutes, when your problems crush you – Jesus cares. He calls your name, just as he called Mary's. And you, too, can go on like the women who went from the tomb, perhaps still a bit afraid yet “filled with joy” (Matthew 28:8) (1)

Vivid Example: The life of Mary Magdalene is a most vivid example of what Jesus can do for a human soul. Her story begins with the darkest of all human misery and ends with the most glorious day in the history of the world. (3)

Committed To Christ: It's all too easy to be saved by Jesus and then go our own way. We're faithful when we need His help, but then our prayers lose their intensity. Mary never seemed to lose her intensity. She was healed of demon possession, and from that point on she never wavered in her commitment to Christ. Mary loved her Lord, not with a passion that would burn out, but with unceasing intensity. May we all be like Mary in this. (32)

Being a Christian Woman: It is fascinating that Jesus chose Mary to be the first to see Him after resurrection and the first to share the good news. It's curious that if Mary Magdalene were with us today, many church pulpits would be closed to her. How wonderful that whatever hindrances to ministry may exist, no one can keep us from sharing Christ with neighbors and friends. (32)

Looking: The love of God is so vast, the power of His touch so invigorating, we could just stay in His presence for hours, soaking up His glory, basking in His blessings. But we can hear Jesus say across the ages, as He did to Mary, "Do not hold on to me." It's not a rebuke, but a reminder. Our times of close, uninterrupted fellowship with Him are sweet – and necessary – but so are the times when we turn our attention toward others, when we take the reality of His love out into the world. (4)

Answers:	1. human soul, misery, world 2. mold, women
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Please note that NO information contained in this study is original work of Susan McGeown, unless otherwise noted.

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