



CALVARY MURRIETA WOMEN'S MINISTRY

LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES

R&R BIBLE STUDY 2017-2018



LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LADIES

A Bunch of Marys: Mary Magdalene: Lesson 5

I'm not sure if I've ever been more excited about studying a woman of the Bible than I am right now as we begin to look at the life of one of the most influential women in the New Testament, Mary Magdalene, or Mary of the city of Magdala, which is a town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. For years she has been portrayed as many things, such as a former loose woman and prostitute, Jesus' wife or lover, and more! I must confess that some of those ideas still lingered in my head, as I was actually taught some of them growing up. (And watching Jesus Christ Superstar in the 70's with my aunt didn't help my theology much either!) Studying what the Bible actually says about her has been exciting, enlightening, and challenging. I've loved getting to know the "real" Mary of Magdala, named as such because of where she was from. Magdala was on the coast of Galilee, three miles from Capernaum, a town known for their dye works and textiles. "Magdala" means tower or castle. I feel like saying, "Will the Real Mary stand up!" I pray that by the end of our lesson together, you will see her for who she is, learn from her life, and be changed by her example of devotion. I may even begin to call her Wonder Woman. Like I said, I REALLY like her.

First Day

1. Let's begin by reading the following verses that talk about Mary, and write a summary of the facts you observe, including specific details about her.
 - A. Luke 8:1-3
 - B. Matthew 27:55-61
 - C. Matthew 28:1-10
 - D. Mark 15:40-47

E. Mark 16:1-11

F. Luke 24:1-12

G. John 19:25; 20:1-18

2. Did you learn any new facts about her that you didn't know?

3. What's your general impression of her upon first reading? Any questions? Thoughts? Interesting observations?

4. If you had to choose one word to describe her, what would it be? Why?

That's it for today. Tomorrow we'll begin to unravel her story a bit and see why these events are so significant. I can't wait! Her story is truly a ***"Reason to Rejoice"!***

Memory Verse of the Week: Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (Which is to say, Teacher). John 20:16

Second Day

Ponder your memory verse. This may seem to be an odd choice for our memory verse, but it's actually very significant. Do you remember when the Lord called you by name?

Mary was mentioned in the Gospels more than most of the apostles. She is actually mentioned at least twelve times, yet we don't really know anything about her life before she met Christ. We know she had seven demons that Jesus cast out. Why they were there, or how long they tormented her, we don't know. We don't even have a record of her behavior while they plagued her. We can look at how others in Scripture acted when they were possessed by demons and maybe make some assumptions, but we really don't know. (Mark 5:1-5, Luke 8:26-33)

We don't know Mary's marital state, her age, or any family history. Of the women who knew Jesus, only Mary of Nazareth is mentioned more times than the Magdalene, as she is sometimes called. She appeared to have an amazing one-on-one relationship with Jesus, is one of His most devout followers, and a crucial eyewitness of some dramatic and important events.

Like it was mentioned earlier, Mary sometimes gets a bad rap. At one point in history, her name was wrongly linked to the "sinful woman" who anointed Jesus with her tears and perfume, then wiped them with her hair (Luke 7:36-50). Her impression as a "fallen woman" has seriously damaged her reputation. The novel *The Davinci Code* portrayed her as Jesus' wife. It has also been said that the seven demons represented seven capital sins, such as lust, covetousness, and pride, to name a few. She was even the inspiration for certain homes for wayward and lost girls. A quote from Pope Gregory didn't help much when he said, "She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary, we believe to be the Mary from whom seven devils were ejected according to Mark. What did these seven devils signify, if to all the vices? It is clear, that the woman previously used the unguent to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts. What she therefore displayed more scandalously, she was now offering to God in a more praiseworthy manner. She had coveted with earthly eyes, but now through penitence these are consumed with tears. She displayed her hair to set off her face, but now her hair dries her tears. She had spoken proud things with her mouth, but in kissing the Lord's feet, she now planted her mouth on the Redeemer's feet. For every delight, therefore, she had had in herself, she now immolated herself. She turned the mass of her crimes to virtues, in order to serve God entirely in penance." (Pope Gregory the Great)

1. While these demons held Mary captive, how do you think she was treated by people in her town? Do you think she was avoided like the plague?

2. How do you think Mary felt during this time? The word that comes to my mind is "powerless." What other adjectives would you use?

I read something very interesting this week regarding Mary. Carolyn Custis James wrote, "We also know that no demon possessed person ever went to Jesus for help. The sick

desperately wanted His help. They traveled for miles, disrupted His work, pulled up roofs, badgered Him, and generally made nuisances of themselves just to get to Him. But no demoniac ever sought Him out. Usually someone else – a desperate parent or a compassionate friend – went to Jesus on their behalf. Sometimes, without being asked, Jesus simply intervened. Around Jesus, the demon possessed were defiant and resistant. Mostly they wanted Him to go away.”

So, if that’s true, Mary wasn’t even seeking Jesus. He searched her out, found her, and pulled her out of the darkness into the light! He rescued her. No wonder she loved Him so much! I hope that brings you comfort as you think about a family member or friend that seems to continually resist the Lord. There is always hope in Him, because Jesus doesn’t give up on the “hopeless” cases!

3. The word I chose to describe Mary was “devoted.” How do her actions reflect that word?

4. After Jesus healed her, she not only became a follower of Christ, but a “devoted” follower. Her heart was bursting with thankfulness, gratefulness, and love. She was sold out, 100 percent His. (Sounds like Mary of Bethany, doesn’t it?) How about you? Are you a devoted follower of Him? Do your actions and your lifestyle reflect that? Is your heart bursting with love?

Before we look at her place at the cross and the tomb, let’s back up a bit. I was reminded of something that was so exciting! I don’t know if I never knew this or simply forgot. We always think of Jesus traveling around with the guys, you know, the Twelve A-postels. But did you know that there were actually women traveling with them as well? Luke 8:1-3 and Mark 15:41 tell us that some women traveled with Him and ministered to Him while He was in Galilee. Luke says they provided for Him “out of their substance,” meaning from their monetary goods, wealth, and personal resources. After Christ healed Mary, He must have invited her to join Him and His followers. Talk about scandalous and controversial! Men listened and learned from the Rabbis, not women. And not just in private, like Mary of Bethany, but out in public. It is said to be “unheard of for a woman to travel with a Rabbi,” but she had a front row seat to all Jesus said and did! Jesus didn’t alienate Himself from women like the rest of the men in their culture. He engaged their minds, challenged their hearts, and recruited them as partners to build His kingdom. Wow, so exciting! No wonder Mary cries out “Rabboni” when she sees the resurrected Lord in John 20:16!

5. In what ways do you think Mary and the other women care for Jesus?

6. What do you think the twelve thought about this?

Jesus came to reveal His Father to His followers and then draw them into a real relationship with Him. He was creating a family, a community of believers, both men and women. Their relationship meant coming to know Him intimately and personally. Their “job” was to learn from Him and pass on everything they learned to us, and to love others as He loved them. Curtis James wrote, “Jesus filled their minds with more than they could possibly absorb. Jesus placed His disciples in situations where they were compelled to live out what they were learning—crisis where they feared for their lives, perplexing situations where they didn’t know what to do next, and especially in relationships where he dismantled their prejudices and tore down long-established social, cultural, and thick barriers. Jesus’ ways were not the ways of the world. He was blazing a different path for those who were following Him. And Jesus was forming them into a family, a body, a community, and a church whose trademark was to be their love for one another. Mary was in the thick of it all, and Jesus had a vital role for her.”

7. How can we minister to and for Jesus “out of our substance?” (Give some practical examples.)

8. Has Jesus been placing you in situations where you’re compelled to live out what you’re learning? In what way?

Those who were following Him, including Mary Magdalene, needed prolonged, continuous exposure to Jesus to become more like Him. They walked with Him for three years, listening to His words, day after day. They saturated themselves with Him.

9. Would you say you are “saturating” yourself with Him? Are you intentionally soaking up His Word to learn of Him?

10. Mary must have finally found acceptance and belonging in the presence of Jesus, especially after being isolated and avoided. He loved her like no one else had. How about you? Do you understand how much the Lord loves you? How does understanding His love restore and transform our lives?

Tomorrow we'll look at Mary's position at the cross, then Mary at the tomb. I'm so grateful the Lord rescued me from the destruction of my past. I was headed in the wrong direction for sure, but Jesus pursued me and literally transformed my life, and my eternity. I owe Him my life.

Third Day

Review your memory verse

1. Let's begin by reading Luke 23:49, Matthew 27:51-56, Mark 15:37-47, and John 19:23-26. Who was lingering near the cross during Jesus' crucifixion? Where did the disciples go, according to Matthew 27:64?

2. How do you think Mary Magdalene felt at this point?

It's precious to know that the Magdalene was there as He died, to bring Him comfort during this horrific time, maybe to hold Mary, His mom's fragile body as she shook with terror at what was happening to her son. To be near the one she loved during His final hour. That word again. Devoted. Still taking care of His needs. Watched. Wept. I would assume this would be a dangerous place to be. It wasn't a popular thing at this point to identify with Jesus. These women followed Him to the end. Her simple presence at the cross showed her devotion to Him.

3. Jesus' friends betrayed Him once again. They took off, leaving Him to bear this burden alone. Have you ever been betrayed by friends or family? How does the example of Christ speak volumes about how we should respond to betrayal?

4. Have you ever betrayed someone or let them down in their time of need? What can you do about it now?

5. It took a great amount of courage for Mary and the other women to follow Jesus and remain there. Do you need courage to follow Him in some way? Courage to do something He's called you to do, or take a stand for or against something? Maybe to speak up for some injustice? How do Mary's and the other women's actions inspire you?

It's awesome that the Gospel writers are so honest about where they were (or weren't) and where the women were. They don't try to downplay the faithfulness of these women. They didn't make excuses for themselves either. The simple fact is, the men weren't there. And the Gospel writers allow the ladies' devotion to the Lord to be seen for the rest of time. If I was writing it, I might've downplayed their faithfulness because I felt so guilty for running and hiding, but the Holy Spirit didn't allow that. They were faithful, staying by the cross for the whole horrible ordeal. Amazing, right? Some of us won't even watch the news because it makes us feel bad. But Mary stayed. She wept. She hurt. But she wouldn't look away from her Lord.

6. According to Matthew 27:57-61, who came and took the body away and placed it in a tomb? Where was Mary?

Read Matthew 28, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-11, and John 20 again. Mary and the women planned to return to the tomb as early as possible to prepare and anoint His body with spices. They couldn't wait to go back. This must have been risky, seeing there was probably extra security around to make sure the body wasn't stolen! Before we discuss the surprise that awaited them, I want you to think about something. Jesus had talked many times about being betrayed, killed, and rising on the third day (Mark 8:31-32, 9:31, and Matthew 20:17-19 for instance), but no one seemed to remember His words. How did they miss that? They get up early, take their spices, and leave their homes, determined to say a last goodbye.

7. Why do you think the disciples and the women overlooked the fact that Jesus repeatedly said He would rise from the grave in three days?

8. According to Mark 16:1-3, what are the women's greatest concerns as they approach the tomb? Was Mary expecting to find a risen Christ?

The point I wanted to make was that even though Mary's world had been shattered, and it seemed like Jesus didn't "come through," she still followed her Lord. She was confused, uncertain, and full of doubt, I'm sure, yet she still chose to wake up and turn to Jesus.

9. Are you facing an uncertainty in your life? Are you confused and frustrated that God doesn't seem to be listening to your prayers? Will you still choose, like Mary, to get up in the morning and turn to Jesus?

Max Lucado points out that the "Marys" are going to the tomb to give, not to receive. Great point. They are obviously not expecting anything in return. He says, "There is no motivation

more noble. There are times when we are called to give money to people who will never say thanks, to forgive those who won't forgive us, to come early and stay late when no one else notices. This is the call of discipleship." We read the text and know what's coming, but they don't. Their hope had been taken away, yet they are compelled by love, driven by devotion. She decided to serve Christ even though she wasn't promised anything in return.

10. How willing are you to give when there is no obvious return? Does your heart desire to be noticed, or thanked, for the good deeds you have done or are doing? Search your heart on this one. It's a doosie. (Perhaps this is what happened to Martha that day in the kitchen!) Do you serve expecting to receive something, either from God or people?

11. Did Jesus expect anything in return when He gave everything for us? Read 2 Corinthians 8:9, Philippians 2:5-7, and Hebrews 12:2.

Philippians 2:3 says, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourself." Let's serve Jesus in humility, with a grateful heart, seeking nothing in return. See you tomorrow, ladies! I wish I could see Mary's face when she is "surprised" by Jesus!

Fourth Day

Today we'll be looking at the passage that contains our memory verse. I pray that you enjoy remembering the day He said your name, and the thrill of meeting Him, face to face, like Mary did! I was as surprised by Him as Mary was!

1. Today we will see what (or who) Mary found when she got to the tomb. Surprise, surprise, surprise ... Read Matthew 28:1-4. Who rolled the stone away? Why do you think God wanted Mary to see the empty tomb?

Have you ever thought about the fact that the stone wasn't rolled away for Jesus to get out, but more likely for the women to see in? I wonder how the Father felt, knowing that the women were just about to discover a huge miracle! I wonder if His heart was bursting!

2. Has the Lord ever “moved a stone” away for you to consider His glory? Perhaps to see His power, feel His strength, or experience His love?

3. Read Mark 16:4-7 and John 20:1-11 and list any additional details these writers give of this event.

4. What was Mary doing outside the tomb?

5. What emotions do you think Mary was feeling? Imagine you are her. Do you think she had mixed feelings?

6. She still doesn't really get it. She's looking for the body, supposing He was the gardener. When did she recognize it was Jesus?

Do you ever wonder if it was the tone of His voice, or the way He said her name that made Mary recognize Jesus? Maybe, all of a sudden, He looked different? Or He simply opened her eyes? I really don't know, but it sure is a sweet moment to think about. He turned her extreme sorrow into complete joy!

7. Sometimes the Lord appears when you least expect Him or in the strangest moment possible. Can you share a time when God showed up in a way you didn't see coming, changing your sorrow into joy?

8. What did Jesus say to her in John 20: 17? What do you think He meant?

9. In John 20:18, what great privilege does she receive from the Lord?

Mary was honored by the Lord to be the first to see the risen Lord, the first to talk to Him, and the first to receive the commission to proclaim the great news to others. Wow, that is incredible. Again, this reveals Jesus' heart towards women and the value He places on them. In fact, all four Gospel writers needed to rely heavily on the women's testimonies of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, because they weren't there! It's interesting that Jesus doesn't speak first to Peter and John, who had just left. But He times it perfectly to speak to Mary first. If I was Mary, and ran back to tell all the guys whom I had met, I probably would have tried to make them feel really bad, even guilty, for not being there when they should've been. But not Mary. She humbly, respectfully, and passionately reveals the encounter she has with Jesus. Of course, they didn't believe, her ... whatever. 😊 Because of the great honor she received from Jesus, some distinguished men throughout history have affectionately given her the title "apostle to the apostles". A. Moody Stuart, a Scottish pastor from long ago, wrote, "She was privileged to follow Jesus to Jerusalem, to look on His cross, to watch at His tomb, to be the first witness of His resurrection, and even to be sent by Him as the messenger of His Word, and apostle to the apostles themselves."

10. Why is it significant to you personally that Mary received all these "firsts"?

Although Mary Magdalene is not mentioned, she is thought to be present in the Upper Room in Acts 1:14 with the apostles, Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers. They were having a prayer meeting. I think this would be reflective of her character, don't you? Then we don't hear anything else about our beloved Magdalene.

Tomorrow we'll review some important things about her life. Until then, how about pondering the excitement she must have felt upon seeing her Lord face to face. Imagine what it'll be like when we see Jesus, face to face! "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). Yippee!

Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory.

1. Let's take some time and think about some lessons we can learn from Mary's life. For starters, how is she an example of what God can do with broken lives?

2. How has God turned your brokenness into something beautiful? Can you share with your group? (If not, do you believe He can?)

3. What would you say is Jesus' view of women and their role in the church? What's your view? Do you think women and their contribution to the church are not only important, but essential? Why?

4. In John 19:26-27, we read Jesus' last words to the apostle John. What does He say? Most think that Jesus uttered these words for His mom's sake. Do you think they may have been for John's sake as well? Why do you think John would benefit from taking care of Mary?

Although Mary Magdalene thought Jesus was dead, she continued to follow Him to the bitter end. She is a great example of not giving up, no matter how dark the road is, or how treacherous it looks. When things look impossible, we should press into Him closer. Fear is real, but so is hope! We always have hope in Jesus! He is always at work in our world and our lives.

5. Does the road you're on seem long and dark? Are you facing a situation that seems impossible? Read Romans 15:13, one of my favorite verses about hope. How does it encourage you today?

6. Mary was at her "end" when Jesus whispered her name and brought her hope. The Lord often waits until we are at our "end" and can't rely on our strength any longer before He steps in and changes the situation. When we give up or give in, He can then fill us with His Heavenly strength. What does 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 say about this?

7. Do you ever rely, or are you now relying, on your own strength and/or wisdom to make decisions or handle problems? Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart on this one. Sometimes we don't even realize we are doing it.

8. We are strong because He is stronger! Are you in need of His strength today? Read the following verses and note what they say about strength.
 - A. Isaiah 41:10
 - B. 1 John 4:4
 - C. Psalm 24:8
 - D. Psalm 138:3

9. How does the Lord lift us up when we're down? Read Psalm 121:1, Psalm 123:1-2, and James 4:10.

Carolyn James wrote, "Jesus' first act after His resurrection was to mobilize the women and send them to their brothers. The blessed alliance was intact and vital to the success of the spreading of the Gospel. God's method of operation hasn't changed from creation to the present. He calls men and women to join forces in serving Him together."

10. What are your thoughts on the quote above?

Let's end by focusing on the joy of knowing the tomb was empty! It's just as significant and life changing today as it was that incredible day! Because He lives, so will we! That's a "**Reason to Rejoice!**"

