

FPFWC Christian Development



The Call of Women

February 2021

Winter Quarter

February 13, 2021

Lesson #2 – Called to Support

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40; John 20:10-18

ICE BREAKER –

- 1. How do we gain a hope that overcomes our fears? Why is this important?***
- 2. How do we, like Mary and the other women, never lose our desire to serve Jesus?***

Key Verse: It came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils.—Luke 8:1–2

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus became well known in the Jewish villages and towns of Galilee by traveling among the people. Peter described this by saying Jesus “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), a ministry that included teaching, healing, and casting out demons (see Mark 1:14–15, 34). Jesus traveled with a large group that included the core 12 disciples and others. The opportunity for women to play a prominent role in Jesus’ ministry made it unusual. Jerusalem had no famous women rabbis. The Jewish high council, the Sanhedrin, had no female members. The prominent sects, the Sadducees and Pharisees, were made up of men only.

The inclusion of women who were not the wives or other family of the disciples was even more unusual (compare 1 Corinthians 9:5). Many charges were made against Jesus during His ministry, including drunkenness, Sabbath breaking, blasphemy, and using the power of Satan (see Mark 3:22–23; Luke 7:34; John 5:18; etc.). Because women traveled with them regularly, we might expect similar charges regarding sexual sins. But no record claims that either Jesus or any of His disciples (male or female) were accused of sexual immorality while they ministered together.

Mary Magdalene was one of these women. She has been especially misunderstood throughout history. Some factions have tried to uncover a romantic entanglement between Mary Magdalene and Jesus. These stories are found only in sources written long after the first century.

For example, a second- or third-century nonbiblical collection of sayings called *The Gospel of Philip* presents Mary Magdalene as Jesus’ “companion.” *The Gospel of Mary*, another heretical document, claims that Jesus revealed special, secret knowledge to Mary alone.

Other fanciful legends claim that Mary traveled from Jerusalem after the crucifixion to the south of France. Medieval accounts sometimes included Mary in the legends concerning the Holy Grail—the cup Jesus supposedly used at the last

supper and that supposedly was used to collect some of His blood at the cross. Yet the actual biblical accounts about Mary Magdalene are sparse on details and have none of these legendary elements. Her real witness is even greater than those!

LESSON COMMENTARY

8:1–3. Jesus' mission involved much traveling and preaching (8:1a, b) (cf. Lk 4:18; Is 61:1), being diligent in His calling and assisted by the Twelve (Lk 8:1c). In all of this activity, several women supported Him (8:2–3). Women were held in rather low esteem in that day, but Jesus loved and sought out those who were outcast and downtrodden by the culture. Although He did not appoint women to positions of leadership or as His apostles, He treated women with respect and esteem, and they showed their appreciation by supporting His mission (8:3c).

15:40–41. Some of the last witnesses of Jesus' death were women **looking on from a distance. Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and Joses, and Salome** had assisted Jesus during His ministry (cf. Lk 8:1–3), which freed Him from routine chores.

Peter preached that Ps 16:10 had prophesied the resurrection (Ac 2:24–28). Since Peter and John **went away again to their own homes** (v. 10), John would have announced Christ's resurrection to Jesus' mother, Mary, who was now staying at his home (Jn 19:27). Since all the disciples except Judas Iscariot were from Galilee, the disciples' homes in Jerusalem may have been temporary lodgings with family or friends for the Passover.

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20:11–13. Jesus' first resurrection appearance was to a woman, Mary Magdalene. This (1) confirms the historicity of the resurrection (no first-century writer would have created a narrative with a woman in such a critical role unless it actually transpired this way), and (2) highlights the importance of women in Jesus' ministry. Mary (see v. 1) returned but remained **outside the tomb weeping** (*klaio*, lit., "wailing"). Still crying, she **looked into the tomb; and she saw two angels in white**. The presence of angels alone should have alerted Mary that Jesus' body was not stolen and something supernatural had taken place. That the angels were seated **where the body of Jesus had been lying** also testified to His resurrection. The angels did not explain to Mary that Jesus was raised (v. 13). They simply asked, **Woman, why are you weeping?** as if to suggest that there was really no reason for sorrow. Mary answered the angels, explaining her theory that the body was stolen. Mary's sorrow, soon turned to joy, would fulfill the promise Jesus gave the disciples in 16:20–22.

20:14–16. When Mary **turned around**, she did not recognize the One standing behind her. For **Woman** (v. 15), see comment on 2:4. Jesus repeated the question spoken by the angels (v. 13) but added **Whom are you seeking?** Mary thought the voice was that of **the gardener**. Perhaps he had placed the body elsewhere. But when Jesus affectionately called her by name (v. 16), she knew it was Jesus. Although she had often called Him Lord (vv. 2, 13, 18), she addressed Him as **Rabboni** (only elsewhere in Mk 10:51), which means **Teacher**. “Teacher” is the most common form of address for Jesus in the Gospels, but is never used of Him after the ascension (cf. 11:28).

20:17–18. Mary was **clinging to** Jesus, holding on to her earthly relationship with Christ. Some see in v. 17 a mystical demand that Mary not touch Christ because of His alleged descent to hell and that He had not yet been in His Father’s presence. The simpler and more likely explanation is that Mary was fervently clinging to Jesus. Therefore, Jesus encouraged her to let go of Him because He was not leaving just yet (**Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father**). He would be with them for a while longer, 40 more days before His ascension, and there would be more time for meaningful interaction later. Then through the Spirit after His ascension, He would be with them forever. Instead of clinging to Him, Jesus wanted Mary to go to the disciples and tell them what she saw and what He said. Mary was instructed to tell the disciples, **I will soon ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God**. The first phrase focused on Jesus’ own unique relationship with the Father (**My Father ... My God**). At the same time, the second phrase (**your Father ... your God**) drew the disciples into a similar closeness to the Father that Jesus Himself had. This is also marked out by Jesus’ reference to His disciples as **My brethren**.

LESSON NUGGET – Mary Magdalene had a deep love for Jesus. He had delivered her from the horror of demon possession and had changed her life completely. Now Jesus had died, and she was intent on finding His body when she ran into Him in the garden. He told her to stop hanging onto Him and to go tell the disciples the news of the resurrection and that He would soon be ascending back to His father in heaven.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary and Wiersbe Expository Outlines on the New Testament*