

MARY MAGDALENE

A DEMON POSSESSED WOMAN BECOMES A FAITHFUL FOLLOWER



BIBLE STUDY GUIDE SERIES



Christ to the World Ministries

P. O. Box 360
Judson, Texas 75660

903-297-0704
903-297-0625 Fax

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Christ to the World Ministries is a nonprofit ministry dedicated to sharing the gospel of Christ with the world through radio dramas and printed and oral studies based on Scripture. The printed lessons can be studied by one person or by a group.

Writer: Mary Lee Gossett

Artist: Ruth Bochte

Editor in Chief: Dr. LeRoy Ford

Bible Editor: Dr. Lorin Cranford

For additional information, please contact Larry Alston. email larryalston@cablelynx.com

Dear Friend,

I am glad that you are interested in studying the Bible. It is God's Word to us and in it, we find the way of salvation and guidance for daily living. The main theme of the Bible is God's love for us and how he expressed that love by Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our sins. Jesus arose from the grave and today He will save every person who puts his or her faith and trust in Him.

This study guide will help you gain a better understanding of the Bible. Open your heart to what God has for you through the study. I have prayed that your study will be life changing.

May God bless you richly,

Larry Alston

Christ to the World Ministries



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a study about a woman who was healed of a terrible affliction by Jesus and became a faithful follower of her Lord. Mary Magdalene stood by the cross of Jesus until the very end and she went with the first ones to discover the empty tomb. Mary proclaimed the very first message that Jesus had risen from the dead.

This study shows Jesus’ power to change a useless life into a shining example. It reveals that less-important service in the eyes of others may be of great importance to God. You will see that every person has gifts that God can use and that there is a place for you to serve in the kingdom of God.

You can write in this study guide. Don’t keep it clean and unmarked! When the guide asks you to respond, don’t simply think of your response. Take time to write it down. Doing so helps to internalize and reinforce your learning. Write from your heart. Only you will see what you write. As writer, I will work along with you as you complete your study. I will share with you my own responses to most of the questions and activities This does not mean that my responses are any more correct than yours; it simply means that you will have the benefit of a fellow traveler walking beside you as you move through the study.

Keep your Bible before you as you complete the study. When asked to read a passage of Scripture, take time to read it.

Ready? Then let’s get started.

Begin your study with prayer. Make the following prayer your very own.

Dear God, please open your Word to me as I study. Speak to my heart. Help me obey your will for my life. Help me do what you want me to do. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.

1 Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3 Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

11 Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus’ body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her, “Woman, why are you crying?”

“They have taken my Lord away,” she said, “and I don’t know where they have put him.” 14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

THE SCRIPTURE

Luke 8:1-3; John 19:25; Luke 23:55-56; 24:1-3; John 20:11-18; Luke 24:10-11

Luke 8:1-3
John 19:25

Luke 23:55-56; 24:1-3

15 “Woman,” he said, “why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.”

16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.”

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).

17 Jesus said, “Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’”

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her.

John 20:11-18

10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

Luke 24:10-11

As Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, he preached by the side of the road, on a hillside, or by the sea. Crowds followed him everywhere. Among them were women who worked in the background to provide for the needs of his ministry. This was unusual, for tradition restricted a woman’s role to that of wife and mother.

THE BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Women occupied an inferior place in Jewish society. A woman’s testimony was invalid. A rabbi could not speak to a woman in public. Her place of worship in the temple was limited to the Court of Women where listening only was acceptable conduct.

Perhaps unusual for that day, the women who traveled with Jesus and his disciples had financial resources. These resources provided for the group as they traveled. The women who followed Jesus were very different from each other. Joanna was a lady of the court. Mary Magdalene had a tragic past. Love for Jesus bound all of them together.

Although other women are named in Scripture, Mary Magdalene is the focus of this study.

MEET MARY MAGDALENE

Who is Mary Magdalene? She is mentioned 14 times in the Bible, but few actual facts are known about her. She lived in Magdala, located south of the Plain of Gennesaret on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Tradition labels her a prostitute, but this idea is based on imagination, not fact. She is mentioned in the chapter that follows the story of a sinful woman in Luke 7 which leads to this theory.



Read Luke 8:1-2. What do these verses tell you about Mary? Write your answer here.

JESUS MAKES MARY MAGDALENE WHOLE

her condition. We are not told the nature of her “possession,” but her past must have been dark and awful.

Jesus cast out seven demons from Mary Magdalene. In Hebrew, seven is the perfect number, the number of completeness. To be possessed means to be controlled by the demon. If Mary was possessed by seven, this indicates the severity and depravity of



Luke tells of Jesus healing many people possessed by demons. (See Luke 4:40-41.) He had only to speak a word to cast them out. Jesus possesses all power.

The Bible teaches that it is possible for unclean spirits to possess a person, but only if the person chooses. Because the Holy Spirit lives in a Christian’s life, there is no room for demons. The Holy Spirit defends! Believers know that “*the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world*” (1 John 4:4).

Read Luke 8:3. Write one way the women supported Jesus’ ministry.

MARY MAGDALENE FOLLOWS JESUS

A group of women supported Jesus’ Galilean ministry financially and served the other followers. Jewish culture did not accept women in places of leadership. The prophetess Deborah in the Old Testament (Judges 4:4) was an exception. No woman was chosen as one of the twelve disciples. Her leadership blossomed in the background. She followed, inspired, prayed, encouraged and served others.



What do you think is the significance of Jesus' permission for the women to follow with his group? Write your thoughts here.

Jesus valued the many women who followed him. His actions clearly revealed his appreciation of them. He taught them just as he taught men and permitted them to travel with him and his disciples.

What do you suppose the disciples thought about the women accompanying them? Check your answer(s).

- The disciples may have thought:
- ☐ the women are helpful
 - ☐ they hurt the ministry
 - ☐ they interfere
 - ☐ they are thoughtful
 - ☐ they should leave

Evidently the disciples also appreciated the ministry of the women. No word of protest was spoken. The women used their resources to provide for the group. On the other hand, including women in Jesus' ministry could possibly mean additional criticism by the Pharisees and others.

Most accounts of women's service to Jesus tell of their devotion at the end of his ministry. This was true of Mary Magdalene. We find her among the last to leave the cross. She was the first to see Jesus after his resurrection.

Read John 19:25. Write what you think Mary Magdalene may have felt as she watched Jesus die.

How did Mary Magdalene and the other women know where Jesus was buried? Read Luke 23:55-56. Write your answer here.

It was customary not to bury the bodies of criminals. Bodies were left for vultures and animals. Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:43) and a secret follower of Jesus (John 19:38), was given permission from the Roman governor to bury Jesus. Joseph had a new tomb (Luke 23:53) where he and Nicodemus took him for burial. Nicodemus, another secret follower, brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes (about 75 pounds). They wrapped Jesus' body with the spices and strips of linen (John 19:38-40; Mark 15:43-46; Luke 23:50-53).

Mary Magdalene and the other women followed Joseph so they knew where the tomb was. Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary lingered at the tomb where Jesus was buried (Matt. 27:57-61). After a time these residents of Galilee went to a place where they are staying in Jerusalem. They were in Jerusalem for the Passover. Now that it was the Sabbath they must leave the tomb.

Read Luke 23:56. Answer the following question.

Why did the women wait until the first day of the week to return to the tomb?

The Jewish Sabbath is Saturday. Jesus' crucifixion ended on Friday and the Sabbath began at 6:00 p.m. on Friday. Sabbath in Hebrew means to cease or to be finished. All work must cease. The fourth commandment required that Israel keep the Sabbath holy (Exodus 20:8-11).

Early Sunday morning before daylight (John 20:1) the women walked toward the tomb. The Sabbath was over and now they could prepare Jesus' body for proper burial. They brought spices (Mark 16:1). They wondered who would help them roll away the stone that blocked the entrance. The stone that sealed the small tomb entrance was shaped like a millstone. It was placed in a groove so that gravity would cause it to roll down and block the opening of the tomb.

Read Luke 24:2-3. Complete the following:

“They found the _____ rolled away from the _____, but they did not find the _____ of the _____.”



Matthew 28:2-4 tells us there was an earthquake and an angel rolled back the stone from the tomb. The women were terrified not to find Jesus, but they saw two men in shining garments (Luke 24:4-6).

JESUS APPEARS TO MARY MAGDALENE

Mary saw Jesus die. Now she saw the empty tomb.

Read Luke 24:4-5, Matthew 28:8, Mark 16:4-8 and John 20:10-13. Imagine the scene and describe Mary’s emotional state when she saw the empty tomb.

Mary was filled with many mixed emotions as she saw the empty tomb. Sorrow, fear, alarm, bewilderment and joy flooded her heart and mind.

Now read John 20:11-16. Place yourself in this scene. Write the strongest emotion you feel as you read this encounter.

Read John 20:17-18. Write what Jesus told Mary.

Jesus told Mary Magdalene two things. He said:

1. _____
2. _____

Mary could not cling to Jesus since Christ was to ascend to the Father. She had no need to panic. She would see her Lord again. Physical fellowship would be resumed later. Mary also had a job to do. She must hasten to tell others, “He is alive!”

In each of the Gospels, women came to the tomb. Only Mary Magdalene is mentioned in John’s account (John 20:1-18). Mark tells us Jesus first appeared to Mary (Mark 16:9).

The Gospel writers do not always follow the same order of events. The writers use different perspectives. The way they arrange material may vary, but all agree on the empty tomb and the fact of the resurrection.

Mary Magdalene and the other women rushed to tell the disciples the good news. Mary shouted, “*I have seen the Lord*” (John 20:18).

Read Luke 24:10-11. Check the correct response in the following:

When the disciples were told that Jesus was alive, their reaction was:

- ☐ joy
- ☐ unbelief
- ☐ fear
- ☐ sorrow

The disciples did not remember that Jesus told them he would suffer many things, die, and on the third day rise from the dead. Their reaction to the women’s announcement was unbelief.

Mary Magdalene rose from a dark, broken and troubled person to become a model of discipleship when Jesus touched her life. This “nobody” who followed Jesus and worked at lowly tasks, was the one he chose first to proclaim the good news of his resurrection.

APPLICATION

Study the four drawings in this lesson. Write beside each drawing a sentence that describes the situation pictured.

We do not know what Mary’s demons were. But today, some problems often seem like demons and keep us from our best service.

Check each item that is true of you in the following:

I would like most to be free of the “demon” problem of:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> worry | <input type="checkbox"/> health concerns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fear | <input type="checkbox"/> financial difficulty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> doubt | <input type="checkbox"/> family discord |

Sometimes, God removes a problem when we ask. Often, he changes the way we see it and gives us power to face the problem squarely and to know “*my grace is sufficient for you* (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Complete the following sentence.

I experience God’s power in my life when _____.

The changed Mary Magdalene showed gratitude by total commitment to Jesus and service in his ministry.

Make a list of ways a person today can show gratitude for God’s gifts.

Place a check by the ones you can show.

Jesus calls his followers to active love and concern for others.

Complete the following sentence:

I can express my love for Christ this week by _____.

Matthew 25:40 tells us, “*Whatever you did for one of the least of these . . . you did for me.*” Acts of service to others is evidence of one’s relationship to the Lord.

Following Jesus is not always easy. Mary Magdalene showed strong, tough faith that enabled her to defy tradition and faithfully follow Jesus.

The women in the group who followed Jesus were very different. Among them was Joanna, whose husband was the manager of Herod’s household. Social standing and economic status varied among the followers. Love for Jesus can cause differences to vanish. There is a place of service in God’s work for each person.

Often, a person does not feel qualified to serve. The Holy Spirit gives every believer at least one gift that he or she can use. Natural talents are enhanced and the believer is empowered in a special way when that talent is used in Christ’s name. It is unwavering faith and devoted service that brings joy and abundant life to the follower. John 10:10 tells us, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”

Mary Magdalene’s faithfulness is an example of a believer whose changed life continues to inspire others. In her life we see God’s power to change the world, one person at a time.

Are there life-changes you can make to strengthen your example to others? Name three.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Jesus commands his followers to “go and tell others he is alive.”

Read Acts 1:8 and Matthew 28:19-20. To whom is Jesus sending you?

What will you say?

Summarize in a sentence or two the main thing God has taught you in your study.

Pray that God will lead you to people who need you this week. Pray that he will strengthen your desire to follow him.

Commit this Bible verse to memory.

“He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation’”
(Mark 16:15).

GUIDE FOR GROUP STUDY

You can lead your family or a group of friends and neighbors or perhaps a church group in this study of Mary Magdalene. Doing so will strengthen your own life, and God will use you

to be a blessing to others. The following suggestions will help you lead a small group study.

Each person in a group has contributions to make. Each person should take part in the discussion. No one should dominate the time together.

Begin the study with prayer.

Read the story of Mary Magdalene on “The Scripture” pages of this study.

Tell the story in your own words. Use the drawings as visual aids. Take your time and show the drawings to the group as you tell the story. Answer any questions group members may ask.

Use with the group the questions and activities under “Application.” Lead each group member to respond.

Lead the group in memorizing Mark 16:15. Ask volunteers to explain the verse in their own words.

Read the section “Responding to God” to the group. Pray the prayer for yourself and help each person to pray it for himself or herself.

RESPONDING TO GOD

Now that you have studied God’s Word, he wants you to respond.

The Bible teaches that you are a sinner. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Rom. 3:10).

But God loves you and sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for your sin. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

You receive Christ as your Savior by turning from your sin and placing your faith and trust in him. “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out” (Acts 3:19). “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

Pray this prayer:

“Dear God, I know that I’m a sinner. I believe Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead and is alive today. I now turn from my sins. I am placing my faith and trust in Jesus alone to be my Savior and to forgive me. I receive Jesus into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will follow Jesus. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me and for coming into my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

Welcome into God’s family!

Share with others that you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Ask for baptism by immersion in a local church as a public expression of your faith. If there is no church near you, start a church by gathering a group of persons in your home and worship together on a regular basis. Read your Bible and pray each day. Tell others what Christ has done for you and what he can do for them.

Notes: