

Mary Magdalene

Introduction; Myths spring up around some folks.

A. They often are made up because someone is famous.

1. Folks want to know more about them. As time goes by some capitalize on this by making up stories.
2. Sometimes, after many years, it is hard to determine what is fact and what is fiction. For example, did George Washington really chop down a cherry tree as a child? Did he really throw a dollar over the Potomac River? Probably not in both instances.

B. Myths have grown up around many Bible characters.

1. This is because the Bible is very brief. It tells us only certain things about its characters. It tells us things we need to know to learn lessons on how to serve God.
2. Yet men want to know more. For example, legends have grown up about the apostles. Where did they go? How did they die? And so forth. In the early church histories there is a lot of fiction mixed in with fact.

C. One of the persons who has a lot of myths about them is Mary Magdalene.

1. Mary Magdalene is mentioned 12 times or so in the Bible. She is one of 5 or 6 different women named Mary in the N.T.
2. She is often mixed up with the sinful women who washed Jesus' feet with her hair. She is also mixed up with some of the other Marys in the N.T. and the woman taken in adultery.
3. One early tradition has her marrying Jesus Christ and having three children by Him. Another tradition has her marrying Jesus' disciple, John in Cana in John 2. When Jesus calls John to follow Him, Mary gets angry, leaves John and becomes a harlot. She is later converted.
4. It is common to call her a prostitute. The Rabbi, in the Talmud (about AD 250 to 500), said the city of Magdala had a reputation for prostitution. Some also suggest this was true because she had seven demons in her at one time. However this is not a necessary conclusion.
5. Some have even made an argument that she was the beloved disciple that Jesus loved and the one who wrote the Gospel of John.
6. In the Middle Ages it was common to make Mary Magdalene a symbol of every woman. She was a sinner like Eve and all women. Eve was blamed for leading Adam into sin and Mary Magdalene and all women still lead men into sin.
7. *'Woman is a misbegotten man, and as it is said, inferior'* —St. Albert the Great (AD 1193–1280).
8. The medieval church called her *'Beata Peccatrix'* (blessed sinner) and *'Castissima Meretrix'* (most chaste prostitute). These are very odd titles.

D. We will consider Mary Magdalene today and see what we can learn about her.

1. Who was Mary Magdalene?

A. **Mary is mentioned only in the Gospels.**

1. A lot of the mentions of her are repetitive. Each Gospel says about the same things. We will consider these and not read every passage.
2. She seems to have been very faithful to Jesus. Jesus honored her as the first one to see her after His resurrection. He did love her greatly, but not as men try to say He did.

B. Mary followed Jesus and helped support Him.

1. *Mark 15:40-41* There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, ⁴¹ who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.
2. *Luke 8:1-3* Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him, ² and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons, ³ and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.
3. Many have wondered how women in that day and time could leave their homes and follow a group of men. Do they only provide for physical needs or are they disciples also. In order to follow Jesus this way, they were probably students too —like Mary & Martha.
4. Mary appreciated Jesus casting the demons out of her and followed and supported Him. We do not know if the demons caused mental illness or physical illness or what they did. It is not a necessary conclusion that she was a prostitute.
5. Jesus takes away our sins by His sacrifice on the cross. We need to appreciate this and follow Him and support His cause today. Mary knew serving Jesus took her time and resources and gave them willingly.
6. She was from Magdala. This was a small village on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. She is identified by her home and not by a man or children. She evidently was unmarried.

C. Mary was at the crucifixion of Jesus as well as at His tomb.

1. *John 19:25* Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.
2. *Matt 27:59-61* When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. ⁶¹ And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.
3. Most of Jesus' disciples fled and were not at the cross. Mary and the women were. We do not know if they were taking a chance being there or not. However they wanted to be there and they were. They make no excuses.
4. Mary Magdalene and other women followed to see where Jesus was buried. They intended to see that He was respectfully taken care of. They do not give up on Him, even though He is dead. Even in death they show Him respect. Others thought, "He is dead. It is over."

D. Mary was the 'apostle to the apostles'.

1. *Mark 16:1* Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.
2. *John 20:18* Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her.
3. **Luke 24:1-12;** Mary and the women go to the tomb to prepare Jesus for burial. They see it empty and also the angels. They go and tell the apostles about all the things they saw.
4. Mary is called the **apostle to the apostles**. Jesus 'sent her' to the apostles. She is the one who first proclaimed that Jesus was raised from the dead. Her faith and sense of duty took her to the tomb first. So she was among the first to know Jesus was raised.
5. We all need this sense of faith and duty. We must do the right thing, even when it seems it will do no earthly good.

E. Jesus appeared to Mary first of all.

1. *Mark 16:9* Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.
2. **John 20:1-18**; Again we see that Mary came first. She ran and told the apostles. While the others returned she stayed. This led to the Lord appearing to her.
3. Jesus appears to Mary first. He then sends her to tell His brethren He was indeed raised from the dead.
4. God does not show partiality. Because of Mary's faith and commitment she saw Jesus first and did what she was told.
5. We need to have great faith and commitment. If we do then perhaps the Lord will use us as well. We need to be praying for the Lord to use us and give us opportunities to tell others about Him.

F. We see then who Mary really was. She was a woman of faith and duty.

II. What lessons can we learn from Mary of Magdala?

A. First we should see her **great faith**.

1. It was a very **persistent faith**. She followed Jesus along with the other men and women. Jesus must have had quite a following as He traveled around.
2. She did what she could to help Him. She helped support Him. She carried His message to the disciples. She, and the other women, probably studied under Him (as did Mary of Bethany; Luke 10:38-42), and possibly even helped teach other women.
3. She went to the tomb and stayed. Men are more practical and saw no reason to stay. Because she was persistent, she saw Jesus first. It does not always pay to be too practical.
4. *Heb 11:6* **But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**
5. *Acts 16:28-33* **But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." 29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.**
6. We need to believe in Jesus today. We need to be persistent in our faith and do what needs to be done whether it seem worthwhile or not.

B. Her faith led her to **follow Jesus and obey Him**.

1. She had a great sense of **duty** and **obligation** because of her faith. She made great sacrifices for her Lord.
2. She gave up her home to travel with Jesus. Since she helped support Him she evidently had wealth. Jesus was an itinerant preacher for 2 or 3 years. She seems to have been with Him most of the time.
3. *Luke 6:46* **"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"**
4. *Matt 7:21* **"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.**
5. Mary knew it was not enough to just believe in Jesus. She knew she needed to act on that faith and obey Him. Her sense of duty made her do things others did not do.
6. We need a sense of duty and obligation that causes us to give of our time and possessions in service to our Lord. We must realize that we must do the things our Lord says to do. Jesus should be able to use us as He did Mary.

C. Mary also **loved the Lord greatly**.

1. Her love was a pure love. Jesus had cast seven demons out of her. He offered her the kingdom of

heaven. She loved Him for this and followed and obeyed Him.

2. *John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments."*
3. *1 John 5:2-3 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.*
4. Mary knew that loving the Lord meant keeping His commands. They were not a burden to her. She was glad to serve Him. The Lord had done much for her and she would do all she could for Him.
5. Jehovah has done much for us today through His Son, Jesus Christ. He loved us first and gave us His Son —1 John 4:19, Rom 5:6-9. We must love Him in return and keep His commands.
6. *John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."*
7. *Mark 12:29-31 Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. 30 'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. 31 And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."*
8. We must love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. This is with all our being. All we have belongs to the Lord and all we do should be for Him. We need to have the love that Mary Magdalene had.

D. **Mary's faith led her to be blessed.**

1. She came to the tomb to see the dead Jesus but instead saw the raised Christ. What a great blessing to be the first to see Him.
2. We cannot be the first to see the Lord but we can see Him. We can see Him by the eye of faith today. We can see Him physically later when He returns for the faithful.
3. *Phil 3:20-21 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.*
4. *Matt 25:34-35 "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;*
5. *2 Tim 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*
6. What a great blessing for those who believe in Jesus Christ, obey Him and love Him. They will hear, "Well done good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord" —Matt 25:21 & 23.
7. This great blessing is only for those who act on their faith. They love the Lord for what He has done for them and obey Him. We need to be among these blessed people.

E. **We see then some very real, practical lessons from Mary of Magdala.**

Conclusion; The truth about Mary is more important than fiction.

- A. **Mary is not an example of the failure of women. She's an example to all of how to love and serve God.**

B. We can become a child of God today like Mary Magdalene was.

1. She was a Jew under the O.T. period. Under the law of Moses she was born a child of God. Her faith and obedience make her a faithful child of God.
2. We become children of God today by being **born again of water and the spirit** —John 3:1-6. We believe the word of God and are baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.
3. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
4. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*
5. Once we become a Christian through faith, repentance and baptism we must then show our faith and love as Mary did, by obeying Jesus and following Him and making sacrifices for Him.
6. See also Matt 28:18-20, Luke 24:44-48, Acts 18:8, 22:16, Rom 6:3-7, Gal 3:26, 27, Col 3:1-4, Tit 3:3-8, etc.

C. If the church can help anyone in their service to the Lord, please let us.