

LESSON 11

February 14, 2021

Unit III: The Call of Women

Showing Loyalty

DEVOTIONAL READING: Romans 4:13-25

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Mark 15:40; 16:1-9; Luke 8:1-3; John 20:10-18

PRINT PASSAGES: Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40; John 20:10-18

Key Verse —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 8:1b-2, KJV)

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The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out. (Luke 8:1b-2, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Discern Mary Magdalene's motivations for committing her life to Jesus.
- Appreciate the sacrifices Mary Magdalene made in order to follow Jesus.
- Embrace a lifestyle of wholehearted discipleship.

KEY TERMS

Healed (Luke 8:2)—Greek: *therapeuó* (ther-ap-yoo'-o): served; "cured" (NIV).

Kingdom (Luke 8:1)—Greek: *basileia* (bas-il-i'-ah): the territory subject to the rule of a king; sovereignty; royal power.

Ministered (Luke 8:3)—Greek: *diakoneó* (dee-ak-on-eh'-o): served; attended to; "were helping" (NIV).

Preaching (Luke 8:1)—Greek: *kérussó* (kay-roos'-so): heralding; publishing; "proclaiming" (NIV).

INTRODUCTION

Today, we hear of many organizations and businesses inviting existing and prospective customers to join their loyalty program. These programs advertise points, free miles, and other perks in an effort to build and retain their customer base. Loyalty is the expression of consistent support or allegiance. Synonyms of the word include constant, dedicated, faithful, dependable, and steadfast. Loyalty is a priority in every institution—government, businesses, community organizations, schools, friendship circles, churches, and families. Humans can be fickle, sometimes easily allowing their loyalty to be swayed by a great sale, flowery words, the promise of promotion, or personal convenience. Many people suffer from a microwave mentality, meaning that they want things quickly (with no waiting). Patience is often in short supply and many are not willing to pay the price that real loyalty often requires. The modern tendency to

embrace an utterly self-centered “when, where, and how I want it” mindset has caused many institutions to falter or fail completely. To be lasting, loyalty must have a firm basis—the basis must be commitment or love (see 1 Corinthians 13:4-8). Loyalty involves devotion rather than a self-serving convenient love, or one that fades when the sale or other benefit ends. God calls us to sincere love and loyalty to church, organizations, and others that inspire us to patiently forgive others with their flaws and to support and promote their best interest. The true premise of loyalty is unfaltering commitment.

THE BIBLICAL CONTEXT

Just as the Samaritan woman was among the first to whom Jesus revealed Himself as Messiah (see John 4:25-26), Mary Magdalene was the first to witness His resurrection. Jesus delivered Mary Magdalene from seven demons, but the Scriptures do not specify the nature of the oppression, whether suicidal tendencies, mental illness, depression, physical infirmity, or something else. When the Scriptures are silent, there is no need to speculate. False claims that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute or even Jesus’ wife have no biblical basis whatsoever. What is known is that Mary was from a town called Magdala in Galilee, hence the name Mary Magdalene. Magdala was a thriving center for the fishing industry and a manufacturing center for wool and woolen dyes. After her transformative encounter with Jesus, Mary went on to lead a group of women who provided for Jesus and His followers from their own resources. The Bible clearly affirms that Mary Magdalene was a dedicated, committed, and loyal follower of Jesus to the end. She was present at His death on the Cross and burial at the tomb, and was the first witness to Jesus’ resurrection. The significance of Mary’s presence on each of these occasions, when the other disciples were notably absent, should not be understated or overlooked. After His resurrection, Jesus told Mary not to touch Him (see John 21:17), a phrase that translators understand as a directive to stop holding on to Him as “Rabboni,” the teacher she had known Him to be. This understanding of Jesus’ statement would support the thought that Jesus earlier expressed to His disciples—unless Jesus returned to the Father, He could not complete His mission and send the Holy Spirit (see John 16:7).

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

A Working Disciple (*Luke 8:1-3; Mark 15:40*)

KJV

AND 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, 2 And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, 3 And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.

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40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;

NIV

AFTER THIS, 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 Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means

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40 Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome.

According to Luke (7:36-50), Jesus was anointed by a woman whom others regarded as sinful. In the dialogue, Jesus forgave the woman of her sins, which prompted the Pharisees in the room to question His authority to forgive sins. After this, Jesus, with His disciples, travelled the region preaching the Good News of the kingdom of God (Luke 8:1). One may gather from Jesus' interactions with people and the content of the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus frequently preached love, forgiveness, healing, wholeness, and relationship with God the Father (see Matthew 5-7). Besides the Twelve, there were a group of other disciples, including Mary Magdalene, who had been delivered from demons and infirmities (Luke 8:2) who, according to Luke, are Joanna, the manager of Herod's household (evidence of Jesus' impact in the local community), Susanna, and others (Luke 8:3a). As Jesus moved from town to town with the disciples, Mark (see 15:40) noted that there were other women with Mary Magdalene who watched from a distance, notably Mary the mother of James and a woman named Salome. The "watching from a distance" (Mark 15:40, NIV) connects with the "belonging to support them" (Jesus and the disciples) of Luke 8:3b. The women were faithfully present at the crucifixion of Jesus as He suffered and died at Calvary (Mark 15:40). While many women of the Gospels were unnamed, these disciples of Jesus were named, indicating their level of status and significance by connecting them to their husbands, work roles, or other identifying markers. Among the other Gospel writers, Luke is very careful to mention that these women were workers within the ministry and added necessary support to meet needs by supplying whatever they could from their own resources.

What Do You Think? We are often tempted to give greater honor to front-line or visible roles in ministry. Explain the importance of the ministry that Mary Magdalene and other women fulfilled for Jesus.

A Weeping Disciple (*John 20:10-13*)

KJV 10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11 But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

13 And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

NIV

10 Then the disciples went back to where they were staying.

11 Now 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."

The disciples returned home (verse 10), not understanding what had occurred after Mary had visited the tomb and found it empty (see verse 9, not in the lesson). At least two of the disciples had run to the tomb and confirmed that it was empty. When they left, Mary remained at the tomb and stood outside of it, weeping (verse 11a). While she was overcome with grief and still weeping, she stooped down and looked again into the tomb (verse 11b). As she looked, she saw two angels in white apparel sitting where Jesus' body had been laid—one at the head and one at the feet (verse 12). Seeing her tears, the angels asked, "Why are you crying?" (verse 13a, NIV). Mary replied that someone had taken away (implying stolen) the body of Jesus (whom she called Lord) and she had no idea of where to find it. Jesus' tomb was a very small room carved in the limestone hillside. The cave-like room probably had several beds or shelves on which to lay other deceased bodies. Each tomb had a large stone specifically designed to fit at the entrance to close and secure the tomb, also known as a sepulcher. The text does not indicate that Peter and John saw the angels that spoke to Mary. It seems that the angels appeared only for Mary's benefit, who was in such a state of grief and was weeping so profusely that she did recognize the peculiarity of their presence. It is possible that the angels appeared as human strangers, as Mary continued to speak to them without any apparent awe or surprise.

What Do You Think? Is it possible to be so distracted by painful or other emotions that you miss a significant occurrence, possibly an angel of God? Some angels appear to us as strangers (see Hebrews 13:2).

A Witnessing Disciple (*John 20:14-18*)

KJV

14 And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

15 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

16 Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. 17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to

my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

18 Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

NIV

14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. 15 He asked her, “Woman, 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 ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending 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.

Immediately after Mary tells the angels the reason for her distraught weeping, she turns her face from the sepulcher. As she turned, she saw a man but did not realize that it was actually Jesus (verse 14). Mary was so deep in sorrow that she did not recognize the angels in the tomb nor Jesus outside the tomb. Jesus asked Mary why she was crying and for whom was she looking (verse 15a). Jesus knew the answer, but likely wanted to ease into the conversation by first acknowledging Mary’s pain and grief. Her response to Jesus’ question was one of hopeful despair. Thinking He was a gardener, Mary asked Jesus to tell her where He placed the body if He had taken it away (verse 15b). So desperate to find her missing Lord, Mary was even willing to go and get Jesus’ body herself (verse 15c). Jesus simply called Mary by her name (verse 16a). As Jesus spoke her name, Mary was able to see Him clearly. She cried out to Him, calling Him “Rabboni” (meaning master or teacher) with excitement and joy (verse 16b). Apparently, Mary moved to embrace Jesus, but He told her not to hold Him, for He had not ascended to the Father (verse 17a). There are many interpretations of this passage. The most likely explanation is much simpler and quite possibly the most accurate interpretation—that Jesus asks her not to “cling” to Him, in the sense of not letting go of Him. Jesus immediately directs Mary to go and tell the disciples that He is ascending, or about to ascend to the Father—His and their God (verse 17b). Despite the emotional upheaval she had encountered, Mary immediately left to share with the disciples her personal encounter with the risen Lord (verse 18).

What Do You Think? When you have an opportunity to share with others your encounters with Jesus, do you go with excitement?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

Everyone has some type of calling from God, one of which is that of being a witness for Him. Our loyalty and commitment to Jesus are often challenged in difficult times, such as the

loss of a loved one. Sometimes, God allows dramatic change that completely redirects our focus and service for Him. Our challenge is to remain loyal and faithful through those trying times, knowing that God is in control.

YOUR LIFE

This week consider your loyalty to Christ. In what areas can you improve (e.g., devotion, witnessing, g, service, obedience, giving)? Examine yourself and make plans to improve.

YOUR WORLD!

This week invite someone else to actively participate in a ministry activity with you.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, help us to grow stronger and wiser. As we grow, we pray for commitment to stay faithful and loyal to You. Help us not to stray from Your commands, and to remain focused and committed, even through storms and difficult days. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Conclusion

CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

While reading the Background Scripture, consider this thought: "Am I a risk taker for Christ?"

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(February 15-21, 2021)

Priscilla: Called to Minister

MONDAY, February 15: "Paul Reflects on His Ministry" (2 Timothy 4:9-18)

TUESDAY, February 16: "Greetings to Saints in Jesus Christ" (Colossians 4:7-15)

WEDNESDAY, February 17: "The Holy Kiss Strengthens Ministry Bond" (2 Corinthians 13:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28)

THURSDAY, February 18: "Ministry Shifts from Jews to Gentiles" (Acts 18:4-11)

FRIDAY, February 19: "Roman Official Refuses to Settle Dispute" (Acts 18:12-17)

SATURDAY, February 20: "Greetings to All Sisters in Ministry" (Romans 16:1-2, 6-7, 12-13, 16)

SUNDAY, February 21: "Priscilla, Key Outreach Minister" (Acts 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19)