

Inspirational Women of the Bible

MARY MAGDALENE



A DEVOTED SERVANT OF GOD
SAVED, DELIVERED, AND RESTORED BY JESUS

HISTORY. CULTURE. CONTEXT. TRUTH..

carlie rae cleveland

The ending of the gospel of Mark is very controversial.

Some scholars believe there is enough evidence that the last chapters of Mark, documenting events after Jesus's death, are reliable scriptures that should be included in the book. Other scholars and theologians believe they should not be included since they weren't recorded in the earliest manuscripts known of the gospel of Luke.

This study references verses from those chapters, but doesn't necessarily support either theory. We ask you to study these theories for yourself to make an informed decision. These controversial texts are referenced, but whether their integrity stands or not does not change the story of the resurrection, our understanding of Mary Magdalene, or her love for Christ.

Hello Friend!

I am so excited you're here! The Bible is one of the most fascinating and captivating books in the world. I pray this study brings you closer to Jesus and He captivates your heart and soul. I pray that the incredible story of Mary inspires you to fearlessly follow Jesus and pursue Him above all else. As you engage in this study, I encourage you to open your Bible and study it deeply for yourself! I implore you to make the Word of God the final authority for your life and the basis of your beliefs. This Bible study is a tool, meant to inspire and encourage you, but not to replace scripture. If you have questions, ask them! Spend time looking further into the history, culture, and context of the events and people in the Bible. God is real, strong enough, and big enough to handle any question you may have or thought you may be wrestling with. Love and pursue Him friend. He is the only thing that will truly satisfy your life and soul.

Sincerely,

carlie rae cleveland



WHO WAS
MARY MAGDALENE?

GETTING TO KNOW

MARY

Mary was a real woman, a female disciple of Jesus Christ, and a woman devoted to following Him. Having an understanding of the history, culture, politics, and popular beliefs surrounding the lives of the people mentioned in the Bible can help us get a deeper understanding of scripture. It also helps us have a more in-depth view of the identity of those mentioned. So, who was Mary Magdalene really?

- Mary Magdalene was a female disciple of Jesus
- Although often confused, Mary Magdalene was not Mary the mother of Jesus and many theologians debate about whether she could have also been Mary from Bethany, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. A commonly held belief is that she is a completely separate person.
- The first mention of Mary Magdalene in the Bible is Matthew 27:56. Chronologically, the first time Mary is mentioned when Jesus is telling the parable of the sower [Luke 8].

We know Mary as “Mary Magdalene”, but Magdalene is not her name, just an indication of where she was from: Magdala.

- Magdala was a city on the shore of the Sea of Galilee
- In Hebrew, Magdala means “tower” [מגדל]
- Magdala is a well preserved city that archeologists have been able to study thoroughly. Based on historical documents, archeological artifacts, and the well preserved architecture of the city, we know that Magdala was a town whose economy thrived on fishing and the textile industry.
- Some theologians believe that Mary was able to follow Jesus’s ministry, support Him financially [Luke 8:2-3], and go on the road with Him and his other disciples because she and/or her family were connected with the garment industry in Magdala.


Many churches and traditions have taught that Mary was a prostitute or even Jesus's wife, but there is absolutely no Biblical evidence supporting those theories. Many people have associated Mary with the "sinful woman" mentioned in Luke 7:37, but there are no indications or implications that that woman is Mary Magdalene.

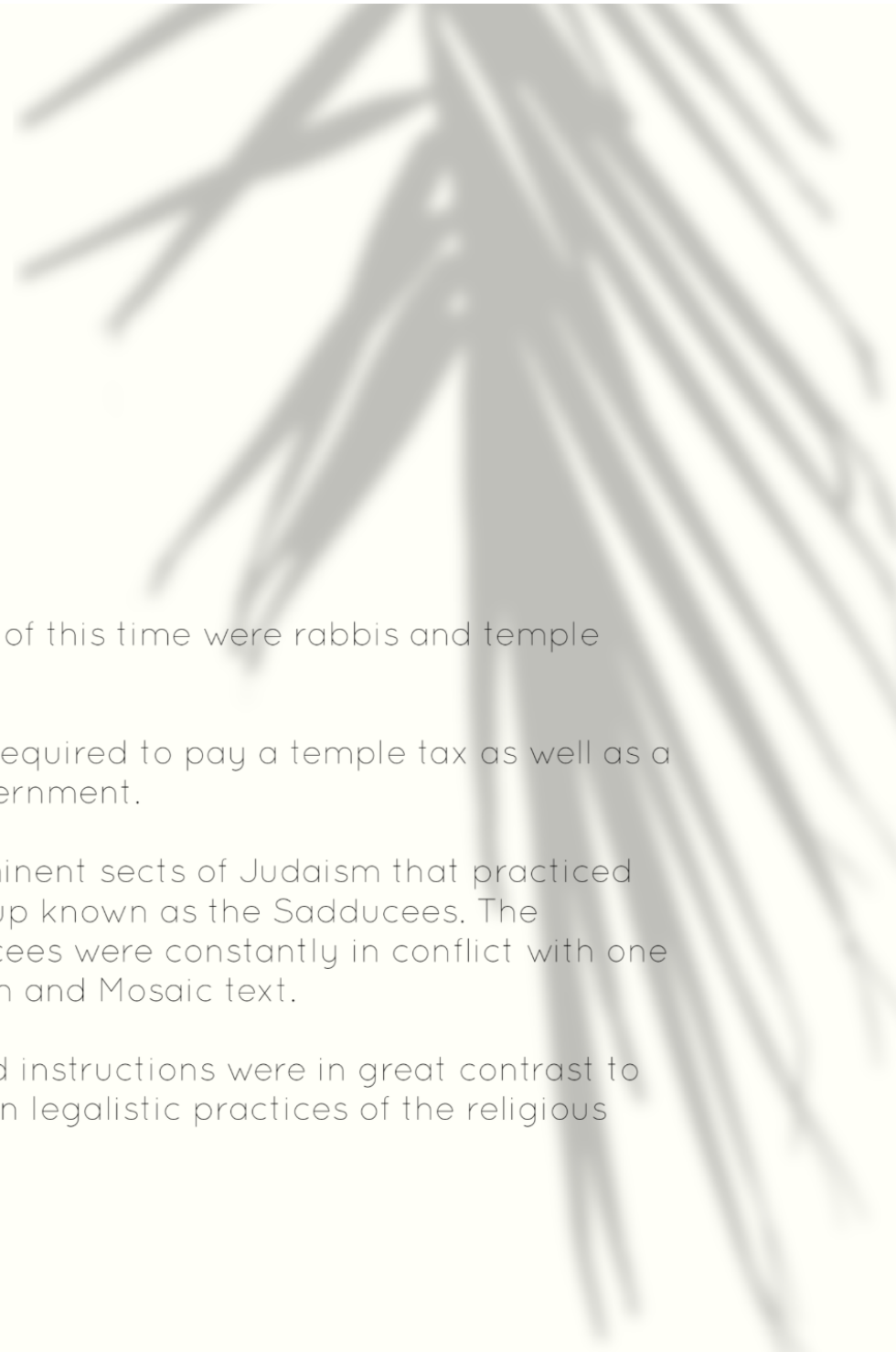
- One of the only reasons people have associated the "sinful woman" in Luke 7:37 with Mary Magdalene is because Mary is mentioned for the first time in Luke 8, following the story of the "sinful woman" and Simon. It seems to be very odd, however, if Luke would have only identified the woman in Luke 7 as the "sinful woman" and then proceeded to mention Mary Magdalene by name, and identify her as the woman Jesus cast 7 demons out of, a few verses later if they were the same woman.
- Mary was afflicted by 7 demons, which Jesus cured her of [Luke 8:2; Mark 16:9]
- Mary was among other women who were disciples of Jesus that He had healed. Luke specifically details that the other women, Susanna, Joanna, and as Luke says, "many others" were also afflicted by evil spirits and illnesses.
- The Bible does not specify if Mary was married or single. We also aren't told her age or profession. Because Mary was following Jesus with his other male disciples, it's likely that she was unmarried.

Historical Culture and Politics

Mary, Jesus, and his disciples lived in Judea, a territory in Palestine [a region between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River]. The Roman Empire had control over Palestine along with Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria, and Greece, and the whole Mediterranean [Modern day Spain, France, Italy, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Northern Morocco, Northern Algeria, Northern Tunisia, Northern Libya, Northern Egypt, Jordan, and small parts of other modern day European countries surrounding the Mediterranean].

- Roman religion practiced the belief that people and everything around them had spirits. They believed their ancestors watched over them, and there were many gods and deities that ruled different areas of life. Roman gods were worshipped in temples. When Rome took over Greek colonies, they adopted some Greek mythological beliefs into their religious system and their gods became more centered on emotions and feelings like love, hate, and jealousy.
- In the patriarchal culture of Jewish Palestine during this time, it was highly unusual for a rabbi to have female followers as mentioned in Luke 8:1-3. Palestinian Hebrew women were often treated poorly by men, and were not valued as equals.
- During this time, men could divorce their wives for a myriad of reasons, big or small, but women weren't allowed to divorce their husbands for any reason in both Jewish and Roman culture.
- Women were treated as second class citizens and generally regarded as weaker and less intelligent and of less value than men. Because of the systems of marriage and women's lack of political, educational, and social rights, it was common to view women as property.

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- Hebrew women had very little property rights. In the very rare occasion they inherited property from their fathers, any male heirs would have first picked. If no male heirs claimed the land, the woman's husband would manage the property or estate.
 - It was a highly debated, controversial topic, during this time in history, among Jewish leaders if women should be educated in the Torah [the Jewish Holy text: the first five books of the Bible]. Generally, only Rabbis' wives were educated.
 - Being widowed or divorced would make surviving extremely difficult.

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- The religious leaders of this time were rabbis and temple priests.
 - Jewish people were required to pay a temple tax as well as a tax to the Roman government.
 - There were two prominent sects of Judaism that practiced Pharisaism and a group known as the Sadducees. The Pharisees and Sadducees were constantly in conflict with one another over the Torah and Mosaic text.
 - Jesus's teachings and instructions were in great contrast to the law-centered, often legalistic practices of the religious leaders at the time.

MARY IN THE BIBLE

In the first chronological mention of Mary, she is introduced as the woman who Jesus healed from seven demons. Mary, and the other female disciples mentioned here, were all detailed as having been healed from “evil spirits and diseases” [Luke 8:1-3].

- Some Biblical scholars believe this means that the demonic spirits were causing mental and or physical illnesses to the women. It’s unclear exactly how Mary had been affected by the demonic spirits, but we can gather some ideas based on other encounters in the Bible where people were healed from demonic oppression and possession. Demonic affliction often caused people:

- Seizures, convulsions, foaming at the mouth, uncontrollable screaming [Luke 9:37-43]

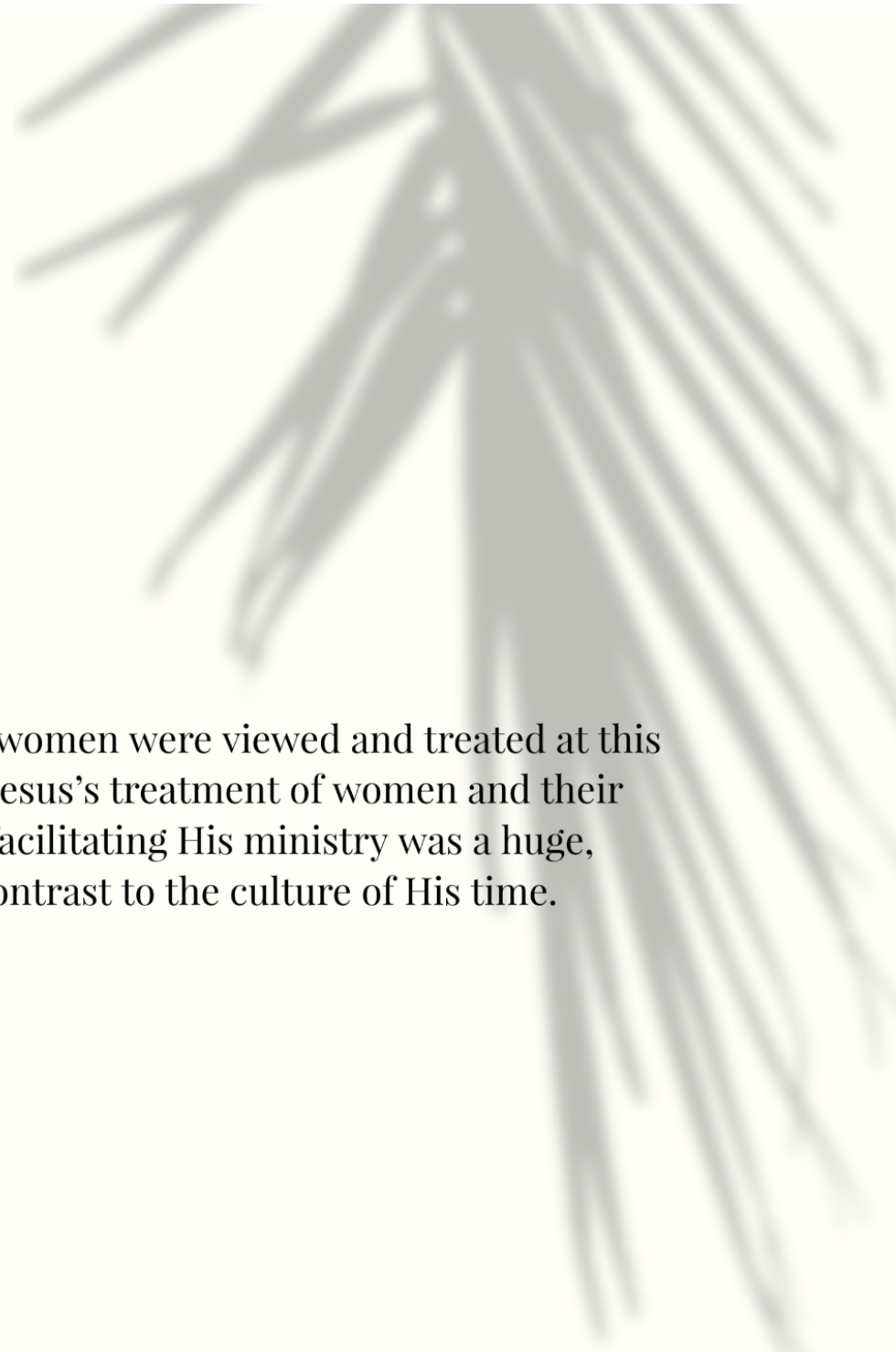
- Muteness [Matthew 9:32; Luke 11:14]

- Blindness [Matthew 12:22]

- Loss of control and extreme violence [Matthew 8:28-34; Luke 8:26-39; Acts 19:16]

- Illness [Matthew 15:21-28; Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 7:24-230; Luke 8:38-41; Acts 19:12]

- It’s assumed by some that because Mary is the only one Luke noted as being affected specifically by seven demons, she was afflicted the worst.



Because of the ways women were viewed and treated at this time in Palestine, Jesus's treatment of women and their involvement in facilitating His ministry was a huge, revolutionary contrast to the culture of His time.

LET'S TALK ABOUT MARY

Mary is only mentioned by name a few times in the Bible, but her legacy is incredible.

She was a deeply afflicted woman, and we don't know how the demons influencing her afflicted her exactly. But, based on other scripture that shares details about the horrors of demonic influence, we can infer it was probably a terrible experience affecting her body, mind, and soul.

We don't get to hear the details of the story of Jesus healing Mary from the seven demons, but we can see that it transformed her life and led her to be a faithful follower of Jesus.

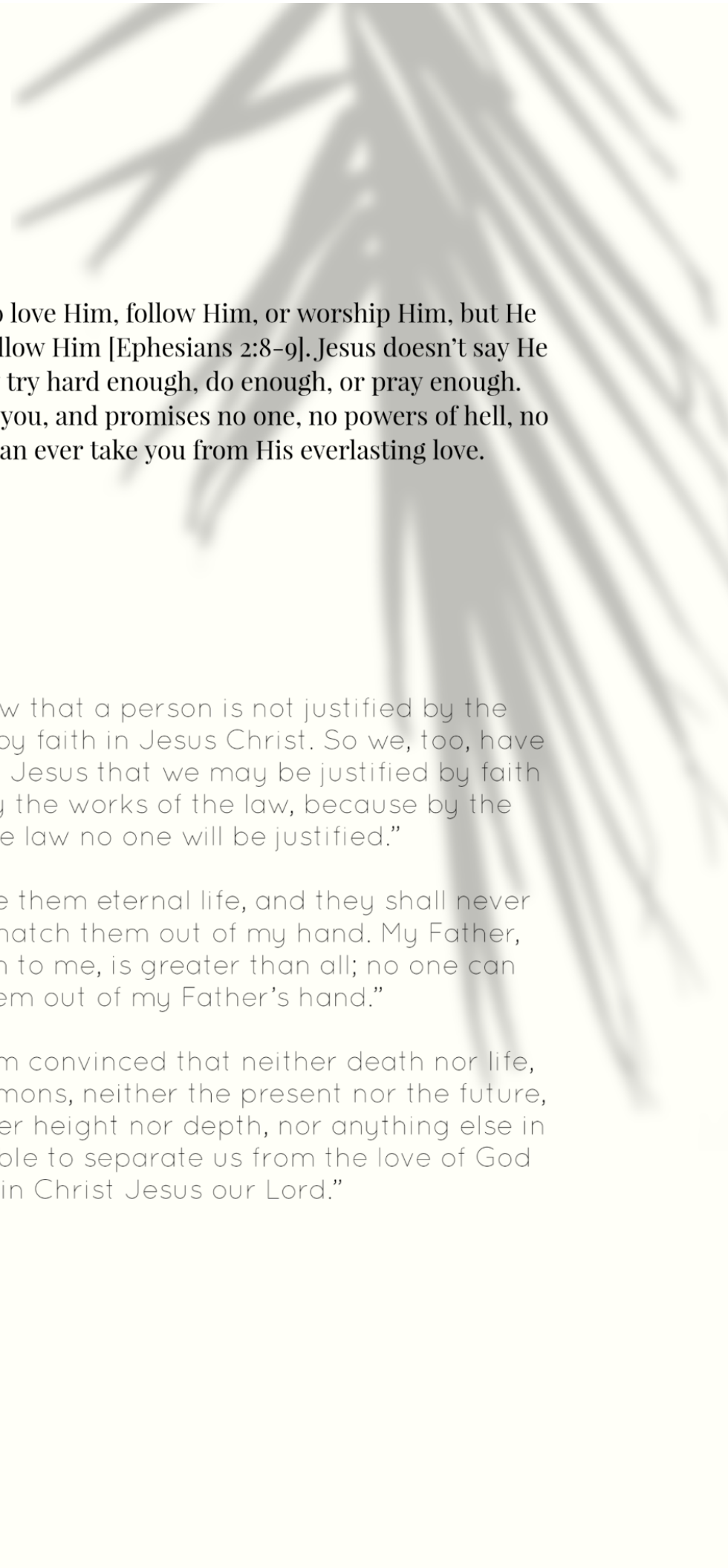
If you look at the other stories of the Bible that detail demonic affliction, the victims were out of their minds, experiencing seizures, and being influenced to hurt themselves or others. They were experiencing a sort of literal hell on earth. Jesus saved them from their afflictions and they were all instantly healed. The demons not only left, they immediately fled in fear, because they knew the powers of God had absolute authority, power and triumph over any and every power in hell.

Imagine being Mary. Maybe for you, her experience is very relatable. Mary may have been experiencing severe mental illness, like other victims of demonic affliction were. Maybe her body was experiencing deep pains and medical issues. She may have been out of control, in many literal ways. Her life may have felt and looked desperately hopeless. It may have been a lonely path where no one knew the deep, dark, horrendous things she endured on a daily basis. For many of us, relating to this is all too real and understandable. Maybe you've been there, physically, mentally, or spiritually, or maybe you feel stuck there now. Those pains are very real pains. Those burdens that weigh hard on your tired soul feel too heavy for you or anyone else to move. It may feel like something or someone owns you. Maybe it feels like everyone has given up on you, and you have no chance. It may feel like no one cares, no one sees, or no one wants to walk with you on your painful journey.

And then, Jesus comes. Jesus: the Lover of your soul, the Savior of the world, the Son of God who can do anything and overcome any battle. He is loving, He is kind, He is faithful, He is gentle, He is patient. He knows your hurts, your struggles, your afflictions, your sins, and the ugliest, muckiest, dirtiest, worst things about you. Still, knowing all of these things, He picks you up and dusts you off. He embraces you and saves you; not just your body, mind, ailments, and afflictions but your very soul. He is the only one that owns you now, and He gives you freedom. Jesus gives you a new name, a new hope, a new future. He is strong enough to lift any burden off of you and carry it for you [Matthew 11:28-30]. He is powerful enough to break all of your chains and is so kind that He will if you simply just ask.

Hebrews 6:19-20 "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where our forerunner, Jesus, has entered on our behalf. ..."

2 Corinthians 3:17 " Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."



Jesus doesn't force you to love Him, follow Him, or worship Him, but He offers eternal life if you follow Him [Ephesians 2:8-9]. Jesus doesn't say He will save you if you only try hard enough, do enough, or pray enough. Jesus just saves you, loves you, and promises no one, no powers of hell, no sin, and no mistake can ever take you from His everlasting love.

Galatians 2:16 "know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified."

John 10:28-29 "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."

Romans 8:38 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Jesus takes your burdens.

Jesus gives you His peace that passes all understanding.

Just like Mary, when you think there is no way out, no hope, no life for you, no purpose, no ease from your pain, Jesus shows up and saves you: heart, soul, body, and mind.

Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Philippians 4:7 "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Psalms 116:1-9 "I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow. Then I called on the name of the Lord: "Lord, save me!" The Lord is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion. The Lord protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me. Return to your rest, my soul, for the Lord has been good to you. For you, Lord, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before the Lord in the land of the living."

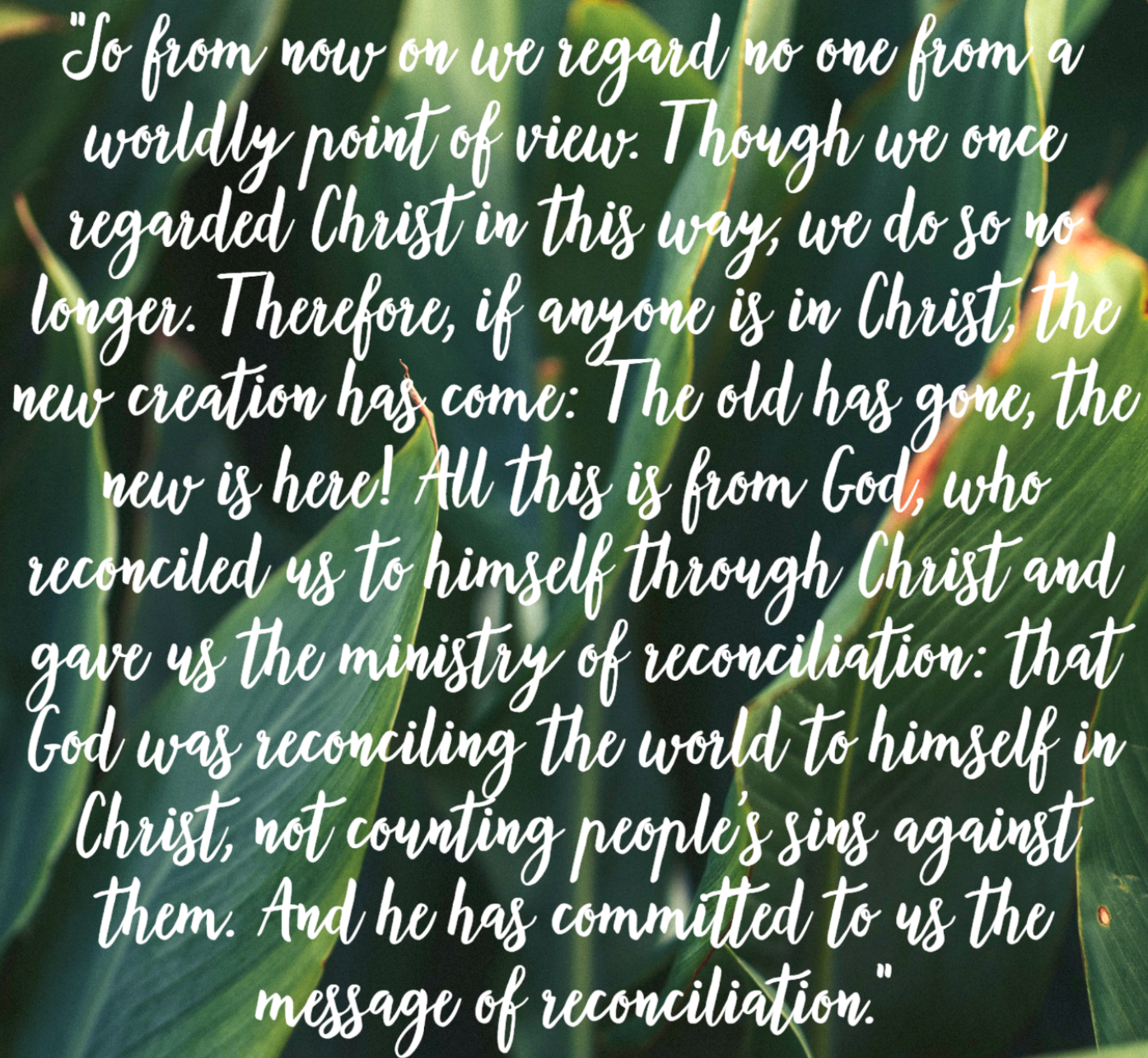


Whether or not you've experienced the physical or mental healing of Jesus, we can all relate to Mary's healing of her broken and lost soul when she found Jesus because that is all of us: broken, lost, no hope, no future, and drowning in sin.

Then Jesus saves us, despite knowing it all, if we simply believe [John 3:36].

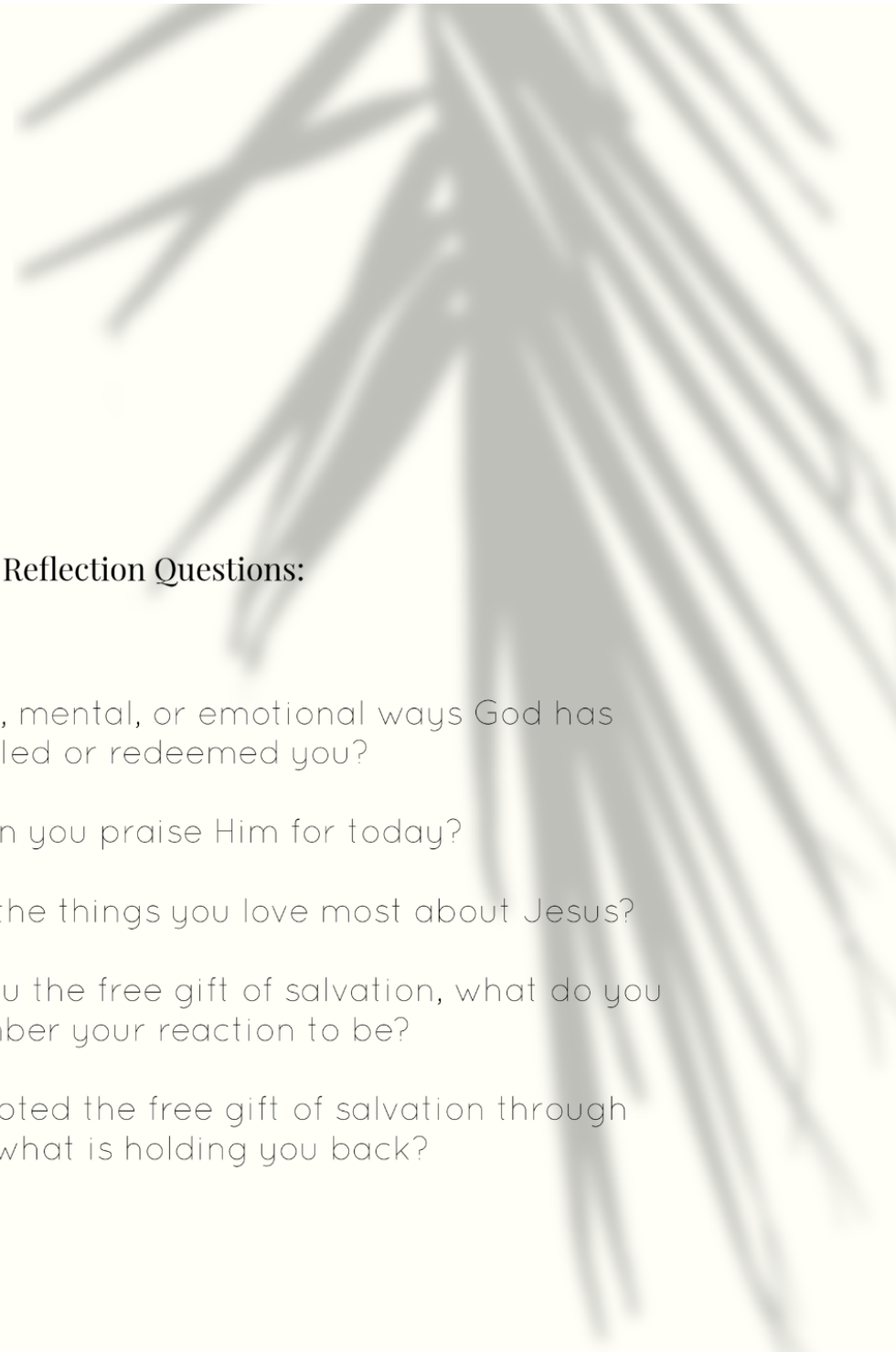
He thought of us on the cross, knowing our sins and worst secrets. But, He loved us so much that He stayed on, suffering and bleeding, so He could pay the penalty we owed for our sins, in full, and save us through His death and resurrection.

Mary experienced the newness of life in two different ways: Jesus healed her and cast out seven demons from her, and she got to experience life again. Her afflictions were lifted. Mary also experienced new life trusting in Jesus. Her soul was not only unafflicted, thanks to Jesus's divine authority and healing, her soul was forever saved and secure in Jesus. She accepted Him as her Savior, and she could begin healing her bruised and battered soul because she had the eternal promise of her Messiah, the only Son of God.



"So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-19



Reflection Questions:

What are physical, mental, or emotional ways God has healed or redeemed you?

What can you praise Him for today?

What are some of the things you love most about Jesus?

When Jesus gave you the free gift of salvation, what do you remember your reaction to be?

If you haven't accepted the free gift of salvation through Jesus, what is holding you back?

Encouragement:

Run to Jesus. Give Him your burdens and rest in Him today. If you feel alone, spend time in worship and prayer with the Lord.

Let God's truth comfort you and remind you, you are never alone if you have Jesus. Spend time in the Bible and let the goodness of God remind you of all God has given you.

Encouragement:

Cultivating a genuine love for Jesus is the only truly sustainable way to follow Him and His commands, through His power and strength. The religious leaders often tried to make their way to God with their efforts, laws, regulations, and by trying to keep the law on their own. Jesus didn't want their seemingly good deeds and acts of worship that were meant to be a show, because they were done for others to see [Matthew 23:27-28]. The irony of legalism is that you believe other people are less valuable, less loved by God, or less important because they are sinful, yet all the while you are sinning in your judgement of them. You don't even see the sinful plank in your eye, as you create an imaginary scale in your head that raises you up and lowers others down [Luke 7:1-5]. Jesus taught something very different than many religious leaders of His time: that what is in your heart is what will come out of you through your words and actions [Matthew 5:27-10; 6:21; 12:34; Mark 7:6; Luke 6:25].

Fill your heart with Jesus. Be like Mary, and be so consumed by your love and devotion for God that you created a genuine love for Him. Be honest with yourself about your love and devotion to Christ, and ask God to search your heart [Psalm 139:23-24]. If you don't really have love for Jesus, get to know Him, truly. Study God's Word, observe Jesus in scripture, learn from His teachings, and see His great love for you. Ask God to cultivate a love for Him in you. Ask God to purify your heart and make Him your treasure.

JESUS AND

MARY

Mary and the other female disciples were following Jesus and supporting Him, along with the male disciples [Luke 8].

- Mary and the other female disciples supported Jesus financially [Luke 8:3]Some of these women were married, some most likely single, but Luke specifies that all of the women used their own means and finances to support Jesus's ministry.
- Mary, Mary Jesus's mother, John, Salome, Mary James and John's mother, and Mary the wife of Clopas were at Jesus's crucifixion [Matthew 27:55-56; John 19:25-26]. It's unclear if any other disciples were present, but Mark describes "many other women" there who cared for Jesus during His ministry [Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:27].
- Mary took part in Jesus's burial. Joseph of Arimathea prepared Jesus for burial and laid Him to rest in his own tomb [Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42]. Mary Magdalene and Mary, Jesus's mother, were there and watched this. It's uncertain, but according to Luke 23:55, there may have been more women accompanying them as well.

These things emphasize Mary's close relationship to Jesus

Mary Magdalene was the first to see Jesus resurrected after his death on the cross.

Mary Magdalene, Mary Jesus's mother, and Salome had purchased spices to anoint Jesus's body with, and they headed to the tomb early in the morning on Sunday. The stone that sealed the tomb had been rolled away by an earthquake, and the women could see that Jesus's body was gone. Thinking Jesus's body had been stolen, Mary ran to Peter and John and told them what she saw. They all returned to the tomb, and the disciples found Jesus's burial clothes.

Mary wept, believing Jesus's body was stolen. Two angels were there at the tomb and asked her why she was crying. She explained that she was looking for Jesus's body. Jesus appeared to her and when she realized it was Jesus, she hugged him and Jesus sent her to tell the disciples about his resurrection. [Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18].

The story of Jesus's resurrection all share different details from different perspectives, but Mary's name is mentioned in all four accounts.

- It's unclear why Mary didn't immediately recognize Jesus, but it's possible that it was because Jesus appeared different after His resurrection.
- In Luke 24:13-35, two disciples were walking and spending time with Jesus and also didn't realize it was Him until they sat down for dinner with Him.
- Mark 16:9-11 and Luke 24:10-21 explain that there were other women with Mary [Joanna, Jesus's mother and the "other women" not named]. It's unclear if the other women were inside the tomb with Mary Magdalene when she spoke to Jesus. Because she is the only one mentioned and named talking with the angels and Jesus, scripture seems to indicate that she was probably the only one inside the tomb while the other women waited outside, or perhaps the other women watched while she was the only one who actually spoke to Jesus. Or, the other women may have had encounters speaking with the angels and Jesus which are simply not mentioned.

Jesus appearing to women first is another clear indication of Christ's revolutionary treatment of women in contrast to first century patriarchy. Jesus appeared to women first which was very symbolic of how much he valued them as equals

- Mary embracing Jesus is very significant, as men and women did not touch in public in Palestine, in this time in history. Kenneth E. Bailey writes in his book, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*, even married Jewish people did not touch in public, and it was highly frowned upon by many prominent Jewish leaders for men to simply speak to their wives in public. He also explains the story of Luke 7, and shares how unusual and counter-cultural it was for the sinful woman mentioned to be touching Jesus's feet.
- The gospel of John specifically highlights women of faith, like the Samaritan woman, Mary of Bethany, Martha, Jesus's mother, and Mary Magdalene. These women had faith that Jesus was the Messiah and had faith in His abilities as the Son of God.
- Many times, like in John 4, these women understood Jesus and believed Him when even His own disciples didn't understand what He meant.
- Mary told the disciples what she saw and that Jesus had been raised from the dead [Matthew 28:8-9; Mark 16:9-11; Luke 24:9-12; John 20:18]. The disciples didn't believe her until Jesus revealed himself to them later.

MARY'S DEVOTION TO JESUS

Mary was faithful to Jesus and His ministry, and she clearly, truly believed that He was the Messiah. Mary gave her time, she cared for Jesus, she traveled with Jesus, she funded Jesus's ministry with her money, and she stayed close to Jesus even when others fled. We can see Peter openly denying Jesus in John 18:15-18; 25-26.

At the crucifixion, the only male disciple of Jesus mentioned is John. Jesus's mother and some female disciples of Jesus were there when Jesus died, but none of the other male disciples of Jesus's core group that He served in ministry with for years were in sight. This is probably largely due to the cultural understanding many people believed about men and women. Often, women had certain liberties to speak or do things men couldn't because they were seen as weak, unimportant, and non-threatening, whereas men were viewed as legitimate threats.

Even so, and through all of the confusion surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus, this begs the question why the men who believed Jesus was Lord would abandon and deny Him at His death. Despite everything, Mary was there. Mary was there for the crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus. She was at her Lord's tomb, ready to care for His body.

In John 20:11-18, you can almost hear the heartbreak and desperation in her voice when she asks Jesus and the angels where her Lord's body is. She thinks someone stole her Rabbi's body and she is weeping, tired and aching in her heart. It's day three of the longest, worst weekend, so far, in the actual history of the world, and she just wants to lay her Lord to rest.

She loves Jesus. I think Mary's love for God and His Son could be the reason why people falsely believe she was His wife. But, we see Mary just deeply, truly, and honestly believed He was the Savior of mankind, and she loved Him.

She ran to tell the disciples of the amazing things she had seen. What I think is so incredible about this is that Jesus chose Mary to be the first one He came to after His resurrection.

Jesus chose Mary to be the one to tell His other disciples that He had been raised from the dead. Jesus chose the once broken, lost, and demon-afflicted woman He saved from desperation to be the first one to share the gospel: That Jesus had been raised from the dead and He was risen indeed. He didn't need her, He could have revealed Himself to everyone in a split second, but He chose to use her and demonstrate His ability to transform, redeem, love, save, and use absolutely anyone.

Jesus chose Mary and Jesus chooses you.

Mary is a woman who people have a lot of ideas and misconceptions about.

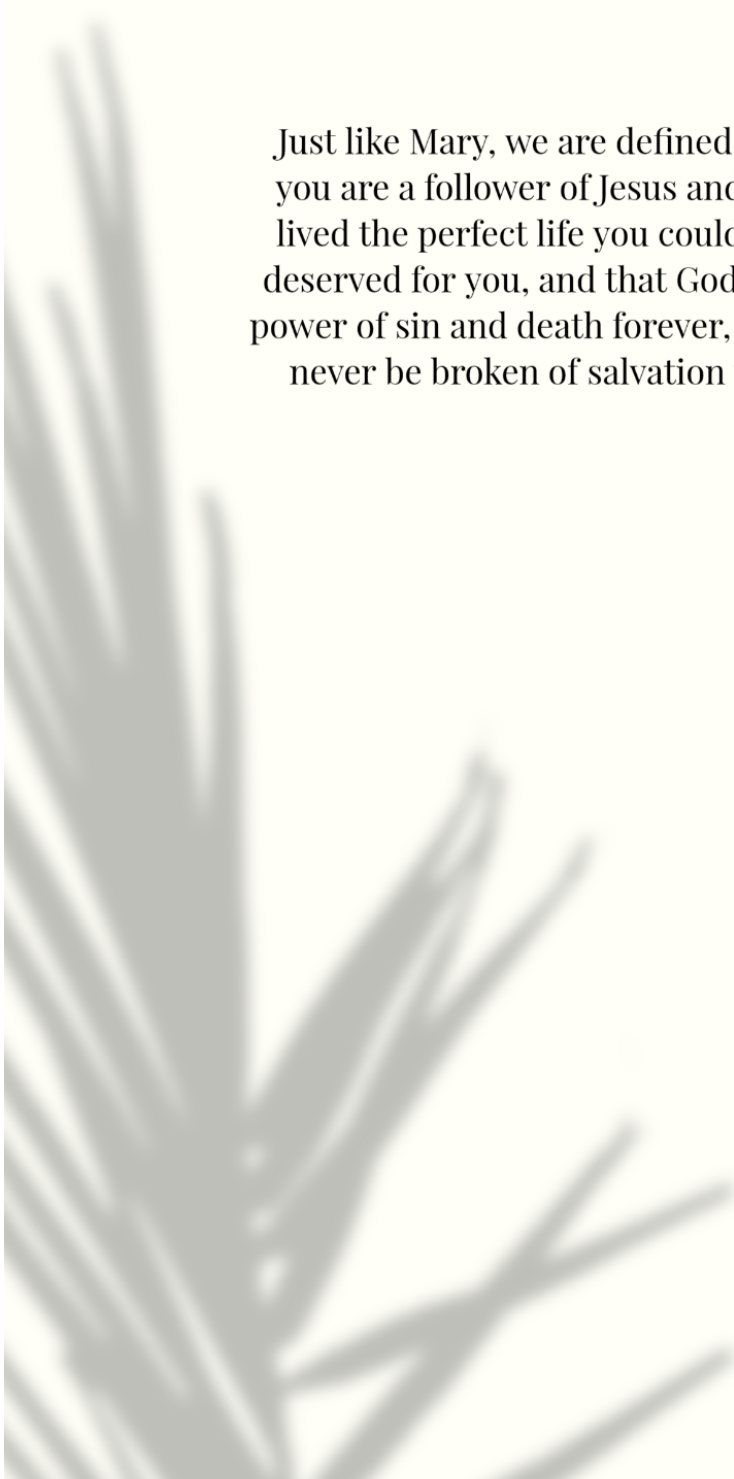
Maybe that's the way you relate to her: people make assumptions about you or form beliefs based off of rumors about you. If Mary were alive, this woman would understand. It seems that most all of the misconceptions and off-the-wall rumors about Mary came about long after she had passed, and have continued long after she's been gone. One detail remains, even in the misconceptions and rumors: that woman loved Jesus. She loved Him with her heart, soul, and life.

Mary probably did receive some backlash and looks during her time with Jesus though. Jesus was breaking the norm and making a huge splash by having women facilitate His ministry and be his disciples. Jesus was unpredictable: no one knew what Jesus would say or do. Despite the Pharisees and Sadducees constantly trying to trap Him in blasphemy, lies, or heresy, He never spoke what they expected Him to speak or did what they thought He'd do. His disciples didn't know what He would say, sometimes why He did what He did, and didn't always understand Him. Jesus also wasn't the political leader many people wanted Him to be, but instead preached a new way to live: love and pray for your oppressive government and those that hurt you [Matthew 5:38-48]. His ministry team was made up of social outcasts, sinners, and formerly demon afflicted people.

The culture at this time was not for women, not for equality, and by and large, was not about women being taught religiously by Jewish leaders as men were. It was a huge controversy at the time, but it never stopped Mary.

Maybe you really feel the pain and relate to Mary's post mortem dilemma. People have made some serious and wild things up about her. But Mary's legacy is not the rumors or lies made up about her. There is no mention in God's Word of the ideas that she was a prostitute or a lover of Jesus; the Bible says Mary was a faithful servant who deeply loved her Lord. Mary is not defined by the things people say or judge her on, Mary is defined by her identity in Christ. Mary is remembered for her love for God, Jesus saving her from affliction, and her service for the Lord.

Just like Mary, we are defined by nothing but our identities in Christ. If you are a follower of Jesus and you believe Jesus is God's only son, who lived the perfect life you could not live, that He died the death that you deserved for you, and that God raised Jesus from the dead, defeating the power of sin and death forever, then you have an eternal promise that can never be broken of salvation with God forever. THAT is your identity. God, what God has done, and what God says about you are what define you. It's easy to say and it can be so hard to accept, especially when people, and people you like, love, and care about, speak rumors or lies or say hurtful things about you. But nothing is more true, permanent or defining than God sending His only son to die for your sins because He loved you so much and has made you a new person through Christ's redemptive power. You are His. That is the truest and most important part of who you are.



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I pray we can all be like Mary Magdalene. I pray that if people have misconceptions, spread rumors, or have false beliefs about us, that our lives are so saturated by Jesus, that no matter what, they see Him. I pray the one thing everyone can see in our lives, no matter what, is our devotion to our Lord. I pray that our lives are not about us and what people think of us, but that they so closely reflect Jesus and point people to Him. I pray our love for others is so deep and genuine that they cannot help but see Jesus. I pray we can all follow God faithfully, love Him truly, and never leave His side. I pray we give to Him, serve Him, and share the gospel. I earnestly pray that Jesus is our all, and we love Him with all that we are.

JOHN 20:18

"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."

Reflection Questions:

What can you learn from the life of Mary Magdalene?

How do you relate to Mary?

What things in your life [relationships, spouse, career, “success”, house, money, status] do you use to define your identity instead of Jesus?

How can you strip everything else away and make Jesus’s work on the cross for you your identity?

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