

## Mary Magdalene

Next to Mary, the earthly mother of Jesus, I am the most recognizable Mary in the Bible. God blessed me enough to mention my name fourteen times in the Gospels.<sup>i</sup> I am originally from the village of Magdala, a bee hive of a town during Jesus' time. This town is located on the Sea of Galilee, near Capernaum, the home base of Jesus' ministry. Industry in this town included fishing, dye works and textiles.<sup>ii</sup> After Jesus performed his miracle of feeding the "5,000"<sup>iii</sup> he is recorded by Matthew as retreating to my hometown. Matt 15: 38: *"The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children. After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan"* (also called Magdala).

Those who embellish God's word have distorted who I was down through the centuries. To clarify, I was not the woman mentioned in Luke 7 who "wet" Jesus' feet with her tears, then *"kissed them and poured perfume on them."* This woman reportedly lived a life of ill repute until she heard Jesus' message and believed in his saving Grace, prompting her to lavish her worldly treasures on him. Like her, was I a sinner in need of saving Grace? Absolutely, and like that woman I had special needs as I was plagued by *"seven demons."* Thankfully, Jesus miraculously drove them out of my mind and my life. Up to this point I worked in one of the industries in Magdala to support myself and had the financial means and heart to give it all up to Jesus when "my time" came. With my sanity restored, I gave up my work in Magdala, and used my earnings to support Jesus and his cause, because in me "He liberated the highest virtues of sacrifice, fortitude and courage."<sup>iv</sup>

After that, for roughly three years I traveled with Jesus from town to town as he began preaching and teaching the Message. We never stayed in one place very long, thus there was a need to attend to the many details that accompany this nomadic lifestyle. Where would he sleep? What would he eat? The particulars of "personal comfort and well-being required attention,"<sup>v</sup> God blessed me and the other women with the means to coordinate and provide what was needed. Was the work easy? As you can imagine it was not, but together we shared in this labor of love. Oh, the fellowship we had together, there was no job more beautiful and inspiring as we saw people's hearts and lives change with Jesus life-giving message.

I am most remembered for my presence at the death and resurrection of our Master Jesus, as God places me, along with Jesus' earthly mother Mary and his aunt Mary at the foot of the cross (John 19: 25). Oh, what a fateful day we shared! Our faith may have been shaken, but God in his glory would uphold us. I could tell you all that happened next, but God tells it best.

*"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!'"*

*So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)*

*Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.*

*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." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.*

*"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."*

*Jesus said to her, "Mary."*

*She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means teacher).*

*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."*

*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: 1-18)*

In my grief at the empty tomb I was overwhelmed, but God did not fail and revealed to me the resurrected Jesus, our Messiah, the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. He commanded me to go and share this news, some believed and some did not. Sisters, please know that what I saw was true and share in the joy that without the Resurrection, nothing else matters, NOTHING! "The bodily resurrection of our Lord is basic and central both for the Christian faith and Christian preaching."<sup>vi</sup> "And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith" (1 Cor 15:14). May what I did and saw inspire you to say "Thee I Will Serve."

Let us pray:

Dear Lord and Savior, thank you for the story of your servant Mary Magdalene. Let us dwell on her example and apply it to our lives. We know that we all have "demons," too many to number. But you have driven them out of our lives through your death and resurrection. In response, give each of us the strength to do your Will. You first appeared to Mary on that wonderful Easter morning. We know that you appear to us every day through your Word.

Keep us steadfast in your Word. Forgive us for doubting that you, and you alone are all we need to gain a life of eternal peace. Accept the works we offer to you as simple and humble as they may be, let them be pleasing and glorify you. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Want to dig deeper?

The Heart of Jesus: Women in the Gospel of Luke. By Marlys Taege. This 12-session Bible study “provides women of all ages the opportunity to encounter the lives of the women we know from the Gospel of Luke and discover their own identity in the heart of Jesus.” To order go to [online.nph.net/the-heart-of-jesus.html](http://online.nph.net/the-heart-of-jesus.html).

Unveiling Mary Magdalene. By Liz Curtis Higgs. “This book gives genuine insight into who Mary Magdalene really was, and it does it in a very personal and revealing way. I was definitely drawn into the character of Mary, as Liz Curtis Higgs brings her life from the pages of the Bible. She presents the unforgettable portrait of a courageous woman who will be forever remembered as the first evangelist to proclaim a risen Jesus!” –Rebecca St. James, recording artist. To order go to [amazon.com/Unveiling-Mary-Magdalene.html](http://amazon.com/Unveiling-Mary-Magdalene.html).

---

<sup>i</sup> Curtis-Higgs, Liz. Unveiling Mary Magdalene. (Waterbrook Press, Colorado Springs, CO, 1973) 2.

<sup>ii</sup> Barber, Wayne; Rasnake, Eddie and Shepherd, Richard. Life Principles from the Women of the Bible, book 2. (United States, AMG Publishers, 2009) 184

<sup>iii</sup> NIV notes, 1462

<sup>iv</sup> Lockyer, Herbert. All the Women of the Bible. (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1967) 101

<sup>v</sup> Ibid

<sup>vi</sup> Franzmann, Werner H. Bible History Commentary: New Testament vol 2. (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing, 1989) 969