

Called to Support

A small group of young men was assembled in the house the church owned. Jalen, a new Christian of eight months, loved attending the young men's group. Minister Duane was talking about choosing the right paths—and the sometimes-brutal consequences of choosing wrongly.

Jalen's friend Martel was currently in the hospital in critical condition. Jalen, Martel, and a group of other friends had gone out last weekend. Before the night was over, there was a police chase involving the car that Martel was driving.

"Jalen, would you share your experiences about following the leading of the Holy Spirit?" said Duane.

Jalen had a feeling that Duane would call on him. Jalen's old friend had come to town and had wanted to get together with some of their old friends, which included Martel and Damien. The night had started with dinner and drinks. Jalen had abstained from the drinks, and his old "crew" ribbed him about finding religion. After dinner, the group went in search of more exciting nightlife. Martel was driving, and wanted to pick up something to liven up the evening.

That's when Jalen bailed. Martel and a few others had made cracks toward him. However, Jalen's friend Damien had not. "Sure, I'll share my testimony," said Jalen as he looked around the group, and his eyes rested on Damien.

1. *Why is a person's testimony usually highly valued in our society?*

2. *Why is the reliability of that testimony dependent on the character of the person offering the testimony?*

3. *Have you ever had to provide your testimony for something? If so, describe the circumstances.*

4. *Do you believe your Christian testimony is unique? Explain your answer.*

Women Healed by Jesus

Luke 8:1-3, KJV

1 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.

Luke 8:1-3, NIV

¹After 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, ²and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³Joanna 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.

Luke's Gospel spotlights several women positively. In the male-dominated culture of Jesus' day, women were frequently demeaned, mistreated, and excluded from the groups of men who became followers of popular Jewish rabbis. Yet, with Jesus were also several women whom He had "cured" (vs. 2) of invasive "evil spirits" and crippling "diseases."

First on the list is Mary, who was originally from the city of Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. For this reason, she was also known as "Magdalene." Jesus had expelled "seven demons" from her. Verse 3 mentions a woman named Joanna, who was married to "Chuza," the household "manager" (NIV) of Herod Antipas (who ruled over Galilee). Luke also briefly referred to a female disciple named "Susanna," about whom nothing else is stated. These followers sacrificially used their own financial resources to "support" Jesus and the Twelve.

5. *What did Jesus do as He journeyed about?*

6. *Who accompanied Jesus during His ministry tour?*

Some Women Witnessed Jesus' Crucifixion

Mark 15:40, KJV

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.

Mark 15:40, NIV

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

At Jesus' crucifixion, only the apostle John of the Twelve was present, but numerous female followers were present. It was "from a distance" that these devoted women watched as the Savior gave His life on the Cross.

Among those whom Mark noted were Mary Magdalene, along with Mary, who is described as being the "mother" of two sons, James and Joseph. This Mary was not only present at Jesus' crucifixion (Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40), but also at the initial discovery of His empty tomb (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10).

At both events, this Mary was accompanied by Mary Magdalene and "Salome" (Mark 15:40). They were part of a larger group of female disciples who traveled with Jesus and the Twelve and helped them during His ministry (vs. 41).

7. *Who was present at Jesus' crucifixion?*

Mary's Encounter with the Risen Lord

John 20:10-18, 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.

John 20:10-18, NIV

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

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

¹³They asked her, "Woman,

KJV

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.

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

why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

¹⁵He 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."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary."

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

¹⁷Jesus 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.'"

¹⁸Mary 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 describes what happened after Jesus' resurrection. Early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene (and other women according to the other Gospels) came to the tomb and saw that "the stone had been removed from the entrance" (John 20:1) and Jesus' tomb was empty. Mary dashed to Peter and

the “other disciple” (most likely John) and told them that people had transferred Jesus’ body to a place she and the other women did not know (vs. 2).

When Peter and John ran to investigate the tomb, they saw that it was empty, but they did not yet fully comprehend what had happened and returned to their lodgings in Jerusalem. Mary evidently had returned to the tomb with them, and at some point she decided again to look inside, where she now saw two white-robed angels sitting at the head and foot of the place where Jesus’ body had been lying.

The angels asked Mary, “Woman, why are you crying?” (vs. 13). When she explained that she was grieved over the possibility that Jesus’ body had been stolen, she turned to see a man she thought was the “gardener” (vs. 15), perhaps because it was common in that day for groundskeepers to perform their duties early in the morning. Like the angels, He asked Mary why she was weeping and who she was seeking. Mary did not answer His questions, but implored Him to reveal the whereabouts of her Lord’s body.

The “gardener” then said “Mary” (vs. 16), and she recognized the Lord when she heard Him say her name. She turned toward Jesus again and exclaimed, “Rabboni!” which means “my teacher” in Aramaic.

Jesus then said to Mary, “Do not hold on to me” (vs. 17). The phrase conveys the idea of “Don’t cling to me.” Mary was to return to the disciples with the marvelous news of Jesus’ victory over death and His coming ascension to the Father. Mary obeyed Jesus by rushing to the disciples, telling them that she had actually seen the risen Lord. She also related the message Jesus had entrusted to her. Mary’s abrupt ascent from the depths of grief to the heights of joy most likely astonished the rest of Jesus’ followers (vs. 18).

8. *What was Mary doing outside Jesus’ tomb?*

9. *Whom did Mary initially encounter at Jesus’ tomb?*

10. *How did Mary respond to Jesus’ presence?*

11. *How did Jesus resolve Mary’s confusion?*

An Aroma That Brings Life

It is said that you may be the only person by which someone will see Jesus. If that is true, then every Christian has the responsibility to be a godly ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Paul said we're "an aroma that brings life" (vs. 16). We're like a fragrant flower, God's handiwork in the world's garden.

Lilias Trotter (1853–1928) grew up in a wealthy family in Victorian England that emphasized walking daily and humbly with the Lord. A talented artist, she caught the attention of art critic John Ruskin, who said her paintings challenged his idea that women could not paint well. But rather than pursuing just an art career, Trotter felt God's call to help others so she could feel closer to Him. She wrote, "To bear His name with all that is wrapped up in it of fragrance and healing and power, to enter into His eternal purpose, is the calling for which it is well worth counting all things as loss."

She began working with the new YWCA organization in London to help train prostitutes for honorable jobs. Ruskin told her she must "give herself up to art" if she wanted to be "immortal," but she told him she could not do that and continue to "seek first the kingdom of God." She continued to paint and draw, but in 1887, when she heard about the need for missionaries in North Africa, she set off with two friends for Algeria, not knowing anyone or any Arabic. She set up 13 mission stations to bring the Gospel to everyone from native tribes to Muslim mystics and Muslim women. By the time she died in 1928, 30 others were helping her bring the Gospel to Algeria. She helped translate Luke and John into everyday Arabic and illustrated her writings so that everyone could see God in His Word and in the beauty of His creation.

12. *What qualities do you have to be Christ's ambassador?*

13. *Why is being Christ's ambassador so important?*

14. *How are you an aroma that brings Christ's life to others?*

Jesus Is the Reason

Many women witnessed Jesus' life and each could claim a unique testimony about Jesus, and although we weren't there as they were, we still have our own individual, unique relationship with Him and can personally testify about Him as our Lord and Savior.

► *Describe briefly how Jesus changed your life through the Holy Spirit and is transforming you into the image of Christ. You have a unique testimony of how He has personally entered your life and delivered and changed it. Use this testimony with people who don't know who Christ is and what He has done.*

KEY VERSE

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

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of February 15 through February 21

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** 2 Timothy 4:9-18—Paul Reflects on His Ministry.
- Tues.** Colossians 4:7-15—Greetings to Saints in Jesus Christ.
- Wed.** 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-28—Encourage One Another.
- Thurs.** Acts 18:4-11—Corinthian Ministry Shifts from Jews to Gentiles.
- Fri.** Acts 18:12-17—Roman Official Refuses to Settle Dispute.
- Sat.** Romans 16:1-2, 6-7, 12-13, 16—Greetings to All Sisters in Ministry.
- Sun.** Acts 18:1-3, 18-21, 24-26; Romans 16:3-4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19—Priscilla, Key Outreach Minister.