##### Mary Magdalene



*The Sabbath was over, and it was almost daybreak on Sunday when Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. Suddenly a strong earthquake struck, and the Lord's angel came down from heaven. He rolled away the stone and sat on it. The angel looked as bright as lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards shook from fear and fell down, as though they were dead.*

*The angel said to the women, "Don't be afraid! I know you are looking for Jesus, who was nailed to a cross. He isn't here! God has raised him to life, just as Jesus said he would. Come, see the place where his body was lying. Now hurry! Tell his disciples that he has been raised to life and is on his way to Galilee. Go there, and you will see him. That is what I came to tell you."*

*The women were frightened and yet very happy, as they hurried from the tomb and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them and greeted them. They went near him, held on to his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said, "Don't be afraid! Tell my followers to go to Galilee. They will see me there."*

## Matthew 28: 1-10

## Background

Mary Magdalene, a woman healed by Jesus, went on to play an important role as a follower of Christ. Mary is mentioned fourteen times in Scripture and referred to in all four Gospels. Unfortunately, she also became an easy target for poets, priests, painters, and performing arts. For 1400 years, Mary Magdalene has been portrayed as the prostitute who was transformed by Jesus. She’s called the patron saint of fallen women.

Mary was from the seaside town of Magdala (which means “tower”) located on the coast of Galilee. We don’t know much about Magdala because it was completely destroyed by the Romans before the Gospels were written. Luke introduces her this way: “The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: **Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out**, and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources” (Luke 8:2-3).

We simply do not know the nature of the seven demons that Jesus cast out of Mary Magdala. There are references to Jesus’ healing people with demons, who had epileptic seizures (Matt 17:15-19), were mute (Matt 9:32-33), were blind (Matt 12:22), hurt themselves (Mark 5:5), attacked others (Matt 8:28), or spoke nonsense (John 8:49-53). These so-called demons could have simply been any combination of mental or physical afflictions.

We do know Jesus healed Mary Magdalene. We are all healed by Jesus. No exceptions. Over the years, many have seen her as an easy target for unsubstantiated allegations. A major accuser was Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) otherwise known as a wise, gifted, and generous leader. He preached an Easter sermon (591 A.D.) in which he inappropriately combined three separate women into one:

1. The "sinful woman" who anointed Jesus’ feet with her tears (Luke 7),
2. Mary of Bethany (John 11 and 12), and
3. Mary Magdalene.

Gregory proclaimed "She whom Luke calls the sinful woman, whom John calls Mary, we believe to be Mary from whom seven devils were ejected, according to Mark. And what did these seven devils signify, if not all the vices? ...It is clear that the woman previously used the same ointment to perfume her flesh in forbidden acts."

Gregory identified Mary’s seven demons as the seven universal "human vices" ("Et quid per septem dæmonia, nisi universa vitia designantur?"). He grouped them together and called them the seven cardinal sins (lust, greed, envy, gluttony, anger, laziness, pride).

Gregory was mistaken. There is nothing in Scripture that connects Mary of Magdalene with the other women cited. In 1969, the Second Vatican Council apologized and declared her a saint. She is "the one to whom Christ appeared after the Resurrection." Recent scholarship has helped restore Mary Magdalene’s name and reputation, but old habits die hard.

To set the record straight, Mary Magdalene made many significant contributions:

* Her name is often listed first among the women who followed Jesus. Her name carries the same respect afforded Peter whose name was always first among disciples.
* She was a woman of wealth. She helped support Jesus and his disciples, a common practice. Mary’s support enabled Jesus to travel and teach.
* While most disciples abandoned Jesus, Mary Magdalene had the courage to follow him all the way to Calvary. She stood beside Mother Mary the entire time.
* She cared for Jesus after his death. She helped at his burial.
* She was the first to see the resurrected savior on Easter morning. She ran to tell the disciples the “Good News.”
* Saint Augustine (also a doctor of the church) called Mary Magdalene “the apostle to the Apostles.” Jesus commissioned Mary to tell the disciples where he was going.
* The disciples did not listen and rejected her message. They should have paid attention. She knew the world’s Greatest News ever!

## Reflections

Contemporary fiction has complicated Mary’s image by asserting she was married to Jesus. This is sensationalism and absolute nonsense. Any serious student of the Bible or Christian history can quickly discount these fabrications. Some people will do anything for money.

Gregory’s judgements about her were a power play. Gregory was first pope elected who was a monk. He was dedicated to universal celibacy. The evidence indicates that Gregory had problems with strong women. He was not that great.

We should all learn from Gregory’s mistake. We should ignore the petty lies and pay attention to the truth Mary proclaimed on Easter morning. Mary was truly the first apostle. Jesus sent her to announce the resurrection.

Jesus gave Mary a very special task in the Kingdom. When we dismiss Mary (or make false allegations) we ignore Christ’s transforming power. Jesus heals us and sends us out to share the Good News. Rich or poor, male or female, sick or healthy, Jesus values us all.

**Strength Finders talent: Significance**

The significance talent is dedicated to making a difference. A big difference. They can dedicate themselves and their resources to change. They are willing to go it alone. It can be a form of bold leadership.

The significance strength helps pull you upwards. To rise above a life filled with limits and setbacks. It can be an aspiration for a better life for self and for others.

Mary was able to rise above her limitations with the teachings and ministry of Jesus. In turn she helped enable his ministry which brings healing and transformation to us all. That’s pretty significant, I’d say.

[**https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252341/significance-theme.aspx**](https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252341/significance-theme.aspx)

**Enneagram connections: Four**

Fours are often aware of their faults and struggles. This is a healthy first step. You cannot move forward unless you identify what is holding you back. Mary did and came to Jesus for healing. Jesus enabled her to become a courageous leader that would in turn help others.

The Enneagram helps us to understand our weaknesses and strengths, our joys and sorrows, our fears, and our hopes. We realize that every time we point a finger at someone else; we have three fingers pointing right back at us. We are all broken. Father Henri Nouwen’s book “Wounder Healer” reminds us that our own pains and struggles can be used to help bring healing others.

[**https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-four**](https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-four)

*Enneagram is an ancient tool used to help us better understand each other. Don’t know your Enneagram type? Check out* [*https://www.wepss.com/*](https://www.wepss.com/)

*(an assessment tool approved by American Psychological Association).*

## Questions

1. Franciscan Friar Jean Tisserand was known for his caring ministry to troubled men and women of the street. He shared Easter joy with this hymn. How has the grave lost its sting? Why were the women faithful? Was Mary a child of the king? Are you?

Sons and daughters of the King, Whom heavenly hosts in glory sing,

Today the grave has lost its sting! Alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

That Easter morn, at break of day, The faithful women went their way

To seek the tomb where Jesus lay. Alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

An angel clad in white they see, Who sit and speaks unto the three,

"Your Lord will go to Galilee." Alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! (1494)

2. God creates, saves, calls, and commands us to serve God. How did Mary fulfill her assignment? How do you fulfill yours?

3. It was a common practice in Jesus’ day for a woman or man of means to support religious leaders. How do we support Jesus’ work today? Why do our donations make such a big difference for the work of the kingdom?

*Trembling with grief came Mary Magdalene,*

*Nor heard the birds, nor saw the lilies’ sheen*

*Glow in the early morning drip of dew;*

*Nor thought she of the dim light shining through*

*The gently stirring leaves of the cypress trees,*

*Nor of the fragrant garden-all of these*

*The things the Master loved. Lonely she wept.*

*Then quietly, not to disturb, she crept*

*Where she could see the great stone rolled away-*

*Angels where she thought his body lay.*

# Softly she asked: “Where have they laid my Lord?”…

*She must believe the angels’ awesome word*

*That he had risen. How could she doubt? And yet*

*She lingered near the tomb and still she wept.*

*“Mary!” Her name. And then she saw his face.*

*Her Lord!* ***Alive****. Without one single trace*

*Of doubt, her joy has braved the centuries.*

*The empty tomb, the angel messages-*

*From these her stricken heart cold comfort drew…*

*Mary had seen her Lord. She* ***knew****. She* ***knew****.*

Ida Norton Munson, 1877