
CBC WEEKLY RESOURCES



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COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
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I. SERMON RECAP

Pastor Gary returned from vacation with a Mother's Day message centered on "women of God" in Luke 8:1-3. He emphasized that godly womanhood is not a cookie-cutter pattern. Some women are like "lilies of the valley," hardened and shaped in the deserts of life with little nurturing; others are like "roses of Sharon," grown in more protected, supported environments. Jesus understands and embraces both. In the same way, the body of Christ needs the full diversity of women's stories, redeemed and offered to Him.

Through the lives of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, Pastor Gary showed three core dimensions of a woman of God:

- Mary Magdalene: a picture of holiness emerging from deep darkness and forgiveness.
- Joanna: a model of godly resourcefulness and stewardship "out of her own means."
- Susanna (and "many others"): the beauty of anonymous, worshipful faithfulness that doesn't need the limelight.

At the heart of the message was a call: women (and men) are needed by God in His kingdom work. We are a "priesthood of all believers." True ministry flows from intimate worship, honest confession, Spirit-led intercession, and faithful stewardship of whatever God has entrusted to us. Whether you feel like a hardened desert lily or a carefully tended rose, God is shaping you into an "oak of righteousness... for the display of his splendor."

II. STUDY GUIDE

KEY POINTS

- **Prayer: more than numbers, about depth and strategy**

God is not moved by how many people are praying, but rather by whether we are praying according to His Word and heart. We are called to move beyond vague, casual prayers into intentional, discerning intercession, especially for our families, our church, and this culture.

- **Identity in Christ: from shame to holy usefulness**

Like Mary Magdalene, some come from very dark or painful backgrounds. In Christ, you are not defined by where you came from or what you did. Deep awareness of your forgiven sin becomes deep love and devotion to Jesus, not lifelong condemnation. You are needed in His ministry.

- **Worship-first posture (Adoration → Confession → Thanksgiving → Supplication)**

True prayer starts with worship. Before we “do” much, we adore God for who He is, confess our sins honestly, thank Him for His grace, and then bring our requests. Worship in “spirit and truth” is the fountainhead of powerful intercession and healthy Christian living.

- **Stillness and honest reflection before God**

We need regular, quiet moments (like praying Psalm 51) to sit with God, remember our need for mercy, and let Him search our hearts. This protects us from pride, numbness toward sin, and spiritual drift in a culture where “up is down and down is up.”

- **Stewardship “out of our own means”**

Joanna and the other women used their financial and practical resources to move the ministry of Jesus forward. A godly woman (and man) asks: “How does God want me to use what He’s given for His kingdom?”

- **Humble, often anonymous faithfulness**

Susanna and “many others” remind us that most kingdom work is unseen by people but fully seen by God. We don’t have to be known by crowds; we only need to be known by Him. Faithfulness in small, hidden acts matters eternally.

KEY SCRIPTURE (NIV)

Primary Text

Luke 8:1–3 (NIV)

1 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.

Other Verses Quoted or Referenced

Luke 7:46–47

46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet.

47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.

James 5:16

16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Luke 12:48

48 But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much much will be demanded and from the one who has been entrusted with much much more will be asked.

Psalm 51:11-12

11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit to sustain me.

Matthew 25:21

21 His master replied Well done good and faithful servant You have been faithful with a few things I will put you in charge of many things Come and share your master's happiness

Isaiah 61:3

3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes the oil of joy instead of mourning and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair They will be called oaks of righteousness a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

1 Peter 2:9

9 But you are a chosen people a royal priesthood a holy nation God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

OTHER RELEVANT VERSES

- **Romans 12:1-2** – Deepens the call to worship with our whole lives and to resist being shaped by a confused culture. (Thematic tie: worship-first living and discernment.)
- **Ephesians 2:8-10**– Shows that we are saved by grace and created for specific good works God prepared in advance. (Thematic tie: identity in Christ and being “needed” in the kingdom.)
- **Colossians 3:23-24**– Encourages us to do all things for the Lord, even unseen acts of service. (Thematic tie: Susanna-like anonymity and faithfulness.)

III. DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL

DAY 1 – “LILIES, ROSES, AND THE GOD WHO SEES”

Reflection Question

Do I secretly believe that my background disqualifies me from being a “woman (or man) of God”?

Reading

- Luke 8:1-3
- 1 Peter 2:9

Devotional Content

Luke 8 gives us a rare glimpse behind the scenes of Jesus’ ministry. Traveling rabbis in the first century were typically supported by male patrons and surrounded by male disciples. Luke deliberately highlights that women, from all kinds of economic situations, were part of Jesus’ traveling band and were “helping to support them out of their own means.”

Mary Magdalene had been tormented by seven demons. In Jewish thought, the number seven speaks of completeness; Luke is telling us her bondage was severe and total. Joanna was married to Chuza, who managed Herod’s household which was a place of political power and moral compromise. Susanna and “many others” remain unnamed, ordinary in the eyes of history, but essential to Jesus’ mission.

Peter later calls believers “a royal priesthood... called... out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). The early church carried forward this image of diverse people all now priests who serve and represent God. Your story, whether painful or privileged, is not an accident but raw material in God’s hands.

Application & Closing Challenge

Spend 10–15 minutes with God today and name the parts of your story honestly you're most ashamed of, or the parts you think are "too ordinary" to matter. Picture Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna walking with Jesus. Then ask:

- "Lord, where do I see myself in these women?"
- "How do You want to use my particular story 'out of my own means'?"

Challenge:

Write a short paragraph beginning: "In Christ, I am not defined by _____, I am called to _____." Keep it where you pray this week, and revisit it daily.

DAY 2 - "WHEN MUCH IS FORGIVEN"

Reflection Question

Do I still feel the weight of my sin enough that grace moves me to deep love, or has sin become "casual" to me?

Reading

- Luke 7:46–47
- Psalm 51:11–12

Devotional Content

Luke 7 describes a scandalous scene: a woman "who had lived a sinful life" enters a respectable dinner party, weeps over Jesus' feet, and pours expensive perfume on Him. In that culture, she had no business being there. Yet she moves straight toward Jesus through a room of judgmental stares.

Jesus contrasts the cold hospitality of His religious host (“You did not put oil on my head...”) with the extravagant devotion of this forgiven woman. He explains her behavior: “Her many sins have been forgiven as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.” Awareness of forgiven sin does not lead to lifelong shame but to lifelong love.

Psalm 51 is David’s confession after his adultery with Bathsheba and the arranged death of her husband. He doesn’t minimize his sin. He pleads, “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation.” Notice: the goal is not just relief from guilt; it is restored joy, intimacy, and a “willing spirit.”

Application & Closing Challenge

Set aside a quiet block today to **pray through Psalm 51 slowly** (not just vv. 11–12 if you can). Let specific phrases become your own:

- “Against you, you only, have I sinned...”
- “Create in me a pure heart, O God...”
- “Restore to me the joy of your salvation...”

Ask God to bring to mind any area where you’ve begun to treat sin casually: attitudes, habits, entertainment, speech, resentment. Don’t rush.

Challenge:

After this time, write down one concrete response of repentance (something to stop, confess, reconcile, or reorder) and one concrete response of love (a way to actively express gratitude to Christ this week).

DAY 3 – “OUT OF HER OWN MEANS”

Reflection Question

If someone examined my finances, time, and energy, what would they learn about my love for Jesus and His kingdom?

Reading

- Luke 8:1–3
- Luke 12:48

Devotional Content

In the first century, most women had little control over money or property. Yet Luke tells us, “these women were helping to support them out of their own means.” Mary, Joanna, Susanna, and the others had found ways to channel resources into Jesus’ ministry. Specifically, Joanna, in connection to Herod’s court, likely had unusual access and insight into managing substantial assets.

Jesus’ words in Luke 12:48 remind us that stewardship is not a side issue: “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.” In Scripture, “much” can be money, opportunities, influence, education, or spiritual knowledge. The question is not “Do I have as much as others?” but “Am I faithful with what I do have?”

In a consumer culture, it’s easy to see resources as primarily for personal security, comfort, and experiences. But the women around Jesus viewed their money and practical skills as tools to sustain the proclamation of “the good news of the kingdom of God.” This is Proverbs 31 lived out in real time.

Application & Closing Challenge

Do a brief personal inventory today:

- **Money:** What percentage of my income goes specifically to gospel ministry, mercy, or discipleship?

- **Time:** How many focused hours each week support kingdom ministry (serving, discipling, hospitality, intercession)?
- **Gifts/experience:** Where could my professional skills or life experience strategically strengthen others?

Ask the Lord: “What is one next step in faithfulness with what You’ve already entrusted to me?”

Challenge:

Make one concrete adjustment this month either a financial commitment, a recurring time block for kingdom service, or using a specific skill for ministry. Share this step with a trusted believer for accountability.

DAY 4 - “HIDDEN YET FULLY KNOWN”

Reflection Question

How do I feel about serving in ways that no one will ever publicly notice or affirm?

Reading

- Luke 8:3 (focus on “Susanna; and many others”)
- Colossians 3:23–24

Devotional Content

Susanna appears only once in the New Testament. We know almost nothing about her story. She is listed and then folded into “many others.” This is not a failure of memory; it is a deliberate reminder that the vast majority of Christ’s servants are never known by name in history and yet are indispensable to His work.

In the ancient world, visibility and honor were highly valued. Patronage systems, public benefactors, and honor-shame dynamics shaped daily life. Jesus subverts this: He values widows who give two small coins, women who touch His cloak in the crowd, children who are usually overlooked, and anonymous disciples like Susanna who fund and facilitate His journeys.

Colossians 3 teaches us to “work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters... It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” This reorients every diaper changed, meal prepared, spreadsheet completed, call made, and neighbor visited. The audience of One sees and rewards.

Application & Closing Challenge

Ask yourself honestly:

- “Where do I feel the greatest resentment or fatigue in my unseen work?”
- “Whose approval am I quietly craving?”
- “What would shift if I truly believed Jesus Himself sees and treasures my hidden faithfulness?”

Bring these answers to God. Invite Him to purify your motives and renew your joy.

Challenge:

Choose one hidden act of service today that you will intentionally offer **only to the Lord**. No posting, no subtle hints, no seeking recognition. As you do it, quietly say in your heart, “Jesus, this is for You.”

DAY 5 – “WORSHIP FIRST, THEN PRAY”

Reflection Question

Have I allowed my prayer life to become mostly requests, without rootedness in worship and confession?

Reading

- Psalm 51:11–12
- James 5:16

Devotional Content

Pastor Gary reminded us that many of us try to skip to “doing” and “asking” without starting with worship. We often equate prayer with reciting needs, but biblical prayer begins with adoration (recognizing who God is) then confession, thanksgiving, and finally supplication.

David’s cry in Psalm 51 is deeply God-centered: “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.” His greatest fear is distance from God, not loss of reputation or comfort. He longs for “the joy of your salvation” more than for mere relief.

James 5:16 adds another layer: “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” Early believers understood that healing often comes in a community where honest confession and mutual prayer are normal, not rare. This is very different from a culture that prefers image management and private spirituality.

Application & Closing Challenge

Try a simple structure in your prayer time today (ACTS):

1. **Adoration** – Spend several minutes simply telling God who He is, using Scripture (e.g., Psalms).
2. **Confession** – Silently or aloud, agree with God about your sin, without excuses.

3. **Thanksgiving** – Name specific things He has done and given.
4. **Supplication** – Then bring your requests—for yourself, your family, our church, and our culture.

If possible, also practice James 5:16 with one trusted believer this week—sharing one real struggle and praying for each other.

Challenge:

Adopt this ACTS pattern at least three times this week. Notice how it shapes not only what you pray for, but how you feel about God and yourself as you pray.

IV. SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

OPENING

Welcome everyone warmly. Acknowledge Mother's Day sensitivities (joys and pains—loss, infertility, strained relationships). Then invite the group into a brief moment of silence to become aware of God's presence.

Call to Prayer Prompt:

“Let's each silently thank God for at least one woman who has influenced our faith. After a minute of silence, a few of you can briefly share those names, and then someone will volunteer to open us in prayer, thanking God for these women and inviting Him to guide our time.”

THEMATIC RECAP

This week's message focused on what it means to be a woman of God (with application for all believers) through the lives of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna in Luke 8:1–3. Pastor emphasized that godly womanhood is diverse but shares common threads: deep gratitude for forgiveness, wise stewardship of resources, humble faithfulness (often unseen), and a posture of worship that fuels intercession and discernment in a confused culture.

Highlights:

- We are not cookie-cutter disciples; Jesus uses our unique backgrounds, desert “lilies” and nurtured “roses” alike.
- Mary Magdalene shows how deep forgiveness fuels deep love and holiness.

- Joanna models kingdom-minded stewardship “out of her own means.”
 - Susanna and “many others” embody anonymous, worshipful faithfulness.
 - Powerful intercession grows out of true worship and honest confession, not just large numbers of people praying.
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ICEBREAKER (5–15 MINUTES)

Question:

“Think of a woman (in your family, church, or history) who has impacted your walk with Christ. What is one specific quality about her that you hope to see more of in your own life?”

Invite each person to share briefly.

SCRIPTURE EXPLORATION

PASSAGE 1 – LUKE 8:1–3

Read the passage aloud.

Discussion Prompts:

1. What strikes you most about the fact that Luke names these women and their contributions?
2. How might this scene have challenged cultural norms in Jesus’ day?
3. What different backgrounds do you see represented (Mary, Joanna, Susanna), and why might that diversity matter in ministry?

4. What does “helping to support them out of their own means” look like in modern church life, for women and men?
 5. Which of these women do you most identify with right now, and why?
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PASSAGE 2 - LUKE 7:46-47

Read the passage aloud and briefly summarize the surrounding story if needed.

Discussion Prompts:

1. How does Jesus interpret this woman’s actions differently than the other people in the room?
 2. What does this teach us about the connection between forgiveness and love?
 3. In what ways can our culture (even church culture) sometimes resemble the judgmental host more than the forgiving Savior?
 4. How can we cultivate a healthy awareness of our forgiven sin without living under constant shame?
 5. How might regularly revisiting a passage like Psalm 51 help keep our hearts tender?
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PASSAGE 3 - JAMES 5:16 (NIV)

Read the verse aloud.

Discussion Prompts:

1. What kinds of “healing” do you think James has in view here (physical, emotional, spiritual, relational)?

2. Why do you think confession to one another is so rare or uncomfortable for many believers?
3. How might a culture of mutual confession and prayer change the spiritual climate of a small group or church?
4. What practical boundaries or wisdom do we need as we seek to apply this verse (e.g., choosing safe people, avoiding oversharing)?
5. How does this verse connect with the call to strategic, content-rich intercession (not just “more people praying”)?

GRAND SYNTHESIS PROMPT

Looking at **Luke 8:1-3**, **Luke 7:46-47**, and **James 5:16** together:

- How do forgiven hearts, diverse gifts and resources, and honest, communal prayer **work together** to form a healthy, kingdom-impacting church?
- Where do you see strengths and gaps in these areas in your own life and in our group/church?

Allow time for open sharing.

APPLICATION: STRENGTHENING PERSONAL & COMMUNAL PRAYER

Invite the group to brainstorm practical steps. You might guide them with prompts like:

For Personal Prayer:

- How can you build a **worship-first pattern** (Adoration → Confession → Thanksgiving → Supplication) into your daily rhythm?

- What would it look like to schedule a regular “Psalm 51 check-in” for heart examination?

For Communal Prayer:

- Could your small group set aside part of your gathering specifically for **targeted intercession** (e.g., for children/teens, marriages, prodigals, our culture, and our missionaries)?
- Would some in your group be called to a more focused “Gideon’s Army”-type intercessory team, praying strategically through the week for CBC and our mission?
- How can the group safely practice **James 5:16**, : perhaps starting with smaller, same-gender subgroups?

Help the group choose **1–2 concrete action steps** for the next month (e.g., “We will end each meeting with 10 minutes of focused intercession using ACTS,” or “Two of us will start a weekly prayer call for our kids and students.”).

CLOSING

Space for Prayer Needs:

Invite each person (or each household) to share one specific request, especially related to:

- Their role as a parent, grandparent, spiritual mother/father, or mentor.
- A place where they need discernment in this confused culture.
- A person they are burdened to intercede for.

Write these down so the group can continue praying throughout the week.

Closing Prayer Prompt (for the leader or a volunteer):

Pray along these themes (in your own words):

- Thank God for the women (and men) He uses like Mary, Joanna, Susanna.
- Ask Him to deepen your group's worship, repentance, and joy in forgiveness.
- Ask for wisdom and courage to steward resources well.
- Ask for a fresh baptism of spiritual discernment and intercessory boldness.
- Ask Him to form "oaks of righteousness" in your group who provide shade, strength, and blessing to many.

LEADER NOTES

- **Create safety.** Openly acknowledge that topics like past sin, shame, motherhood, and money can be tender. Set ground rules: confidentiality, no fixing unless invited, and listening without judgment.
- **Model vulnerability.** As a leader, share appropriately from your own story (areas of past brokenness, growth in stewardship, struggles in prayer). This permits others to be honest.
- **Watch time and emotions.** Some conversations may surface deep pain. Gently validate emotions but avoid turning the group into a counseling session. If needed, follow up one-on-one or refer to pastoral care.
- **Honor all women.** Remember that on Mother's Day many carry grief or unfulfilled desires. Name this, and honor spiritual mothers: women who mentor, teach, and pray, whether or not they have biological children.
- **Keep Scripture central.** Let the text guide the discussion. If it drifts into opinions or political commentary, gently bring it back to what Jesus says and does in these passages.

- **Encourage next steps.** Before ending, ask each person privately or publicly: “What is one small, specific step you sense God inviting you to take from this message?” Pray that over them in coming weeks.

Use these resources as a flexible guide. Depend most on the Holy Spirit’s leading as you shepherd the group in worship, confession, thanksgiving, and bold, strategic supplication.

