



WHERE LIFE & PURPOSE CONNECT

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of July 6, 2025

Weekly Prayer

Loving God, you conquered the grave and rose to life again, giving me the hope of new life – now and forever. Help me to live each day with confidence that I follow a living Savior and that the power of the Holy Spirit lives in me. May your hope be a beacon of light in this dark world. Amen.

Monday, July 7

Scripture: Luke 8:1-3

Soon afterward, Jesus traveled through the cities and villages, preaching and proclaiming the good news of God's kingdom. The Twelve were with him, along with some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses. Among them were Mary Magdalene (from whom seven demons had been thrown out), Joanna (the wife of Herod's servant Chuza), Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

Observation

This passage is the earliest point in Jesus' ministry where any gospel named Mary Magdalene. (The Chosen's depiction of Jesus reaching out to Mary is a "plausible" (their guideline) imagination of how they might have met, based on Luke 8:2.) Scholar Richard B. Vinson noted that the reference to "seven demons" was "a sign of her misery, not her wickedness (see Luke 8:30; 11:26)."* Luke's gospel was the most inclusive of women and most often noted Jesus' positive treatment of them.

Application

Too many of us think of horror movies when we read that "seven demons had been thrown out" of Mary. A demon in the first century could be anything from an unexplained physical illness to a psychiatric disorder to an addiction of some kind.... Whatever had afflicted Mary, she was a troubled person until she met Jesus, who set her free from the demons. From what destructive habits, beliefs or influences has Jesus set you free? How do you express your gratitude?

Prayer

Lord God, thank you for the "demons" you have freed me from. Please continue to guide me to grow in the freedom you came to offer me from all that is destructive. Amen.

* Richard B. Vinson, study note on Luke 8:2 in The CEB Study Bible. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013, p. 124 NT.

Tuesday, July 8

Scripture: Matthew 27:55-56, 61

Many women were watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to serve him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting in front of the tomb.

Observation

Mary Magdalene's name was not used in the gospel of Matthew (and in Mark 15:40, 47) until the story's tragic ending as Jesus died on the cross. We might not notice a detail that showed her importance to the early Christians. She is always listed first in groups of named female disciples. Compare Jesus' disciples, who betrayed (Matthew 26:48-49); abandoned (Matthew 26:56); or denied (Matthew 26:69-75) him. But Mary and "the other Mary" (likely Jesus' mother) were still there.

Application

There was another reason the Romans (and the Temple rulers who demanded Jesus' death) may have allowed the women to stay at the scene of the crucifixion. They considered women insignificant, not worth their attention. Scholar N. T. Wright said one-way Romans and Temple rulers tried to deny Jesus' resurrection was "perhaps the women went to the wrong tomb."* Why did Matthew and Mark make it plain that the women knew exactly where Jesus' body was?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Jesus triggered profound loyalty in Mary Magdalene when he delivered her from the destructive forces in her life. Grow in me that same loyalty and commitment as I recognize how you have delivered me. Amen.

*Wright, N. T., Matthew for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 16-28 (The New Testament for Everyone) (p. 194). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

Wednesday, July 9

Scripture: Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the tomb.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they could go and anoint Jesus' dead body.

Observation

Jesus' resurrection is just a "given" in our culture, whether we believe it or not. But neither Matthew nor Mark tried to pretend that Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary" went to the tomb on that fateful Sunday morning because they expected Jesus to be alive. Matthew made it sound like curiosity led them there. Mark was even more direct in saying they brought the traditional spices to finish anointing Jesus' dead body. After all, they'd seen him die, hadn't they?

Application

Author Philip Yancey wrote, “We who read the Gospels from the other side of Easter, who have the day printed on our calendars, forget how hard it was for the disciples to believe.”* Imagine Mary Magdalene, carrying spices to finish properly preparing Jesus’ dead body for burial, instead finding no body at all in the tomb she knew had held it on Friday. What would you think if you were in her shoes?

Prayer

Jesus, thank you for Mary Magdalene’s faithfulness to you when she thought you were dead. Thank you that she went to the tomb to make her amazing discovery that Sunday morning! Amen.

* Yancey, Philip, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (p. 214). Zondervan. Kindle Edition. ** Ibid., p. 211.

Thursday, July 10

Scripture: Luke 24:1-4, 9-11

Very early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb, bringing the fragrant spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they didn’t find the body of the Lord Jesus. They didn’t know what to make of this. Suddenly, two men were standing beside them in gleaming bright clothing.

When they returned from the tomb, they reported all these things to the eleven and all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. Their words struck the apostles as nonsense, and they didn’t believe the women.

Observation

Luke (who “investigated everything carefully”—Luke 1:3) added a strikingly honest note about Mary Magdalene in his resurrection report. Like Matthew and Mark, he said the women went to the tomb to ready Jesus’ body for burial, and an angel told them Jesus was alive. But, he said, when the women gave the apostles the news, “their words struck the apostles as nonsense.” These are women who’ve been with the group since Galilee (Luke 8:1-3), but the male disciples dismiss their testimony.

Application

When he wrote, Luke believed the women’s testimony; he chose to honestly report the realities of the world he lived in. “According to all four Gospels, women were the first witnesses of the resurrection, a fact that no conspirator in the first century would have invented. Jewish courts did not even accept the testimony of female witnesses.”* Who do you think the initial response of the male disciples disappointed more: the women or Jesus himself?

Prayer

Lord God, people who knew and loved you said that, against all their expectations, you were fully alive again. Save me from being too smart to believe their eyewitness testimony. Amen.

* Yancey, Philip, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (p. 212). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

Friday, July 11

Scripture: John 20:1-2, 10-13

Early in the morning of the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. She ran to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they've put him."

Then the disciples returned to the place where they were staying.

Mary stood outside near the tomb, crying. As she cried, she bent down to look into the tomb. She saw two angels dressed in white, seated where the body of Jesus had been, one at the head and one at the foot. The angels asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

She replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I don't know where they've put him."

Observation

John's gospel gave the largest, most personal account of what Mary Magdalene felt on Easter morning. It seems likely that at some time John got to listen as Mary told her story of that morning. But all through his gospel John also focused on the meaning of what happened. For instance, "In John's Gospel, Jesus or John mentions life or eternal life forty-seven times. That's more than Matthew, Mark, and Luke combined. That focus always anticipated Jesus' defeat of death.

Application

"Simon Peter entered the tomb and saw the linen cloths lying there. He also saw the face cloth that had been on Jesus' head. It wasn't with the other clothes but was folded up in its own place." (John 20:6-7) If robbers had stolen the body, they would not have troubled to unwrap the spiced grave clothes and lay the head covering neatly to the side. How did the grave clothes mean Mary's initial guess fell well short of what had really happened?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, what an amazing scene John described! Keep the wonder I feel alive in me, transforming how I see the world and my role in it. You have overcome everything, even my lethargy. Amen.

Saturday, July 12

Scripture: John 20:14-18

As soon as she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she didn't know it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she replied, "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 and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabbouni" (which means Teacher).

Jesus said to her, "Don't hold on to me, for I haven't yet gone up to my Father. Go to my brothers

and sisters and tell them, 'I'm going up to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene left and announced to the disciples, "I've seen the Lord." Then she told them what he said to her.

Observation

We come to the glorious final point of Mary Magdalene's story. In verse 15, Jesus called her "Woman" (not as rude then as it sounds today—he spoke to his mother that way in John 2:3-4). But after she stated her sorrowful question, it got personal. Jesus simply called her name—"Mary"—and she replied "Rabbouni" (the personal form of the more formal "Rabbi"). In that moment of connection, Mary's sorrow turned to joy in a flash. Jesus knew her, not as a statistic, not as a woman with a troubled past, but by name. He trusted her, commissioning her as the first witness to his resurrection: "Go to my brothers and sisters and tell them." Scholar N. T. Wright said, "If someone in the first century had wanted to invent a convincing story about people seeing Jesus, they wouldn't have dreamed of giving the star part to a woman. Let alone Mary Magdalene."* Jesus knew her, trusted her, empowered her. The human barriers of gender and reputation were all gone in his new creation.

Application

John used a symbol to point to that new creation. John "mentions that there was a garden where Jesus was crucified, and then he says 'in the garden there was a new tomb.' Matthew, Mark, and Luke don't tell us there was a garden where Jesus was crucified, nor where he was buried.... John's Gospel opens with the words "In the beginning," the same words that open the Book of Genesis. Genesis starts in a garden. John's Gospel ends in a garden. In Genesis, God plants the garden. In John, when Mary Magdalene stands at the empty tomb and first sees the resurrected Christ, she thinks he is the gardener.... I believe John wants us to understand that Jesus came to break the curse, to destroy death, and to heal God's garden. Paul describes Jesus as the 'second Adam.' Perhaps that same idea is what John has in mind here."** How has Jesus' creative power brought newness and restoration in your life? How can you join in that work of restoring the world to God's original intention?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, fill me, like Mary Magdalene and those first witnesses to the resurrection, with your light and life. Guide me to ways to share it with others. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *John for Everyone*, part 2. Westminster John Knox Press., 2004, p. 148. Kindle Edition.

** Hamilton, Adam, *John: The Gospel of Light and Life* (pp. 156-157). Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition