

APPLICATION

- How have you encountered Christ so far? If you have not yet taken that step, would you like to allow Him to transform your life starting today?
- A relationship with Christ goes beyond miraculous encounters. How are you continuing to follow Him every day?
- Encounters with Christ begin with experience and turn into testimony. How can you share about your encounters and relationship with Christ to a family member or friend this week?

PRAYER

- Thank God for sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to bring us the good news and make a way for us to be with Him forever.
- Pray that your relationship with Christ will deepen beyond miraculous encounters with Him.
- Ask God for opportunities to share your testimony with family members and friends. Pray for them to encounter God the way Mary Magdalene did.

The CROSS

Mary Magdalene

WEEK 4

WARM-UP

- Share something that you just found out but was common knowledge for others. What was your initial reaction?
- Talk about a time someone convinced you to do something that you ended up enjoying. What changed your mind?
- Share a realization that strongly changed how you saw a person or incident. What was the turning point?

WORD *¹Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." JOHN 20:1-2*

(Read also **JOHN 20:3-18** and **LUKE 8:1-3**.)

Jesus had been crucified to death on the cross. His body had been wrapped in spices and linen, and laid to rest in a tomb. From the account of John, it is not clear why Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early. She may have come to complete part of the burial ritual, or to grieve. Regardless of her intention, Mary was chosen as one of the first people to see the empty tomb and then to see the resurrected Christ. Let us look at how Mary's encounters with Christ transformed her position from oppressed to valued witness.



1 | Jesus delivered Mary Magdalene from demons.

¹Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out . . . **LUKE 8:1-2**

Mary Magdalene once lived under the spiritual oppression of seven demons. Imagine the suffering and shame she must have felt while going through this. When she finally had an encounter with Jesus, she experienced the freedom and deliverance that she truly needed. She became one of Jesus' disciples, supporting His ministry, as some other women did, *out of their own means* (Luke 8:3), and followed Him even until His death. When you reflect on your own journey with Christ, what moments of freedom or transformation do you see? How did you respond to what Christ has done for you?

2 | Jesus revealed Himself to Mary Magdalene first after His resurrection.

*¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. . . . ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). **JOHN 20:13-14, 16***

Upon seeing the empty tomb, Mary alerted the disciples. She wept at the tomb, thinking that someone had taken Jesus' body (John 20:11, 13). She did not know that the one she was talking to was Jesus Himself (John 20:15). It was only when

Jesus called Mary by name and intentionally spoke to her first out of all His disciples that she recognized who He was. For everyone who follows Christ, He knows us by name and is intentional about His plans for us. How have you experienced this in your own life?

3 | Jesus called Mary Magdalene to be the first to testify about His resurrection.

¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

JOHN 20:17-18

In the time period and culture that Jesus lived in, women were not considered credible citizens. Their word was worth nothing, and they would likely not be counted among disciples or followers of any teacher. However, Jesus clearly turned no disciple away, whether man or woman. We can see that through Mary's encounter with Jesus, she was transformed from being oppressed to following Jesus. She even boldly testified about the empty tomb to Simon Peter and John, and they believed her word. Share about how your own life has been transformed after encountering Christ.
