

Mary Magdalene; Lydia; Priscilla and Aquilla

Day 1

Mary Magdalene

1. What role did women have in Jesus' ministry? Luke 8:2,3

- What is unusual about some of these women? Luke 8:2 How much gratitude for Jesus do you think Mary Magdalene had?
- What social barriers do you see overcome? What does Jesus' acceptance of their help communicate?

2. What other events did women observe? Matthew 27:50-61 (See also Mark 15:27-47)
What does this say about their devotion and courage?

FYI: "In a male-dominated society, the Holy Spirit prompted Mark to underscore the prominent role of women, both named and unnamed (15:40), as authentic witnesses to the gospel (see 1 Cor. 15:3-4). They were eyewitnesses to Jesus' death (15:40-41), to his burial (15:47), and to His resurrection (16:8)." - The Africa Bible Commentary (1200)

3. What concern did Mary and the other women have on their way to the tomb? Mark 16:1-3
(Since Mary had observed Jesus' crucifixion and burial, how convinced would she have been of Jesus' death? What does going to the tomb say about her courage and devotion?)

Food for Thought: "I wonder if halfway to the tomb they had sat down and reconsidered. What if they had looked at each other and shrugged. 'What's the use?' What if they had given up?...Whether or not they were tempted to quit, I'm glad they stayed the course. For if they hadn't, it would have been tragic. You see, we know something they didn't. We know the Father was watching. Mary and Mary thought they were alone. They weren't. They thought their journey was unnoticed. They were wrong. God knew. He was watching them walk up the mountain. He was measuring their steps. He was smiling at their hearts and thrilled at their devotion. And he had a surprise waiting for them." - Max Lucado

4. When Mary saw the stone rolled away, what did she assume? John 20:1,2

- For whom was the stone rolled away? Did Jesus need the stone moved to exit the tomb? See John 20:19; Luke 24:31,36,37

5. Underline what Jesus had told the disciples.

- Mark 8:31 And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. NAS
- Mark 9:31,32 For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, "The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later." But they did not understand this statement, and they were afraid to ask Him. NAS
- Mark 10:32-34 They were on the road going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking on ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were fearful. And again He took the twelve aside and began to tell them what was going to happen to Him, 33 saying, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and will hand Him over to the Gentiles. 34 They will mock Him and spit on Him, and scourge Him and kill Him, and three days later He will rise again." NAS

6. Who else knew about this prophecy? Matthew 27:62-66 What does that indicate about how widely known this was?

7. How did the disciples respond to the women's testimony? Luke 24:10,11

FYI: "In first century Judaism, a woman's testimony wasn't considered credible. So if the disciples were going to invent a resurrection story, they wouldn't choose women (see Matthew 18:1-10) to be the first to see and declare it. The fact that the first witnesses were women provides evidence for the historicity of the resurrection."

- The Tony Evans Study Bible (1266)

8. After Peter and John (John 20:3-10) had come to the tomb and left, what state was Mary in? 20:11

- What did Mary see in the tomb? What did she still believe? John 20:12,13 (Why do you think it was so difficult for her to comprehend that Jesus had been resurrected?)

FYI: weeping Strong's #2799 *klaio*...to sob, i.e. wail aloud

9. How was her confusion answered? 20:14 Why do you think she didn't recognize Jesus? 20:15

10. Why do you think both the angels and Jesus asked Mary why she was crying?

11. What did it take for Mary to recognize Jesus? 20:16 (What tone do you hear in His voice? What expression do you see on His face?)
12. What announcement was Mary privileged to give? 20:17 (See also Mark 16:9-11)

Applying the Word: *If you could be transported back in time to Jesus' days of earthly ministry, what service would you like to give Him? Besides the resurrection, what event would you like to have seen?*

Day 2

Lydia. Read Acts 16:13-17

13. What difficulty did Paul have with his ministry in the province of Asia? Acts 16:6-8 (Note the phrases that describe who was blocking this. 16:7,8)
 - What caused Paul to leave and go over to Macedonia (Greece)? 16:9-10
14. Where did He travel to first? 16:12 What made this city a good place to start? (Philippi was 8 miles inland from the port of Neapolis (modern day Kavalla) connected by a Roman highway.)

FYI: "This city was well known for its rich gold mines and water springs...It was also a Roman colony, which increased its importance."
- The Africa Bible Commentary (1329)

"Because of its proximity to the sea as well as to one of the major roads to Europe, Philippi was a commercial center in Macedonia. Its influence throughout the region made it a good place to begin preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ."
- The Nelson Study Bible (1850)

15. Where did Paul and his co-workers go on the Sabbath and who did they find? 16:13

FYI: "Paul normally went first to a local synagogue when he arrived in a new city [see Acts 13:14, but apparently there was none in Philippi. Since a group of only ten active men was required to constitute a synagogue, there must have been only a very small Jewish population there. The only such religious activity on the weekly Sabbath was apparently a ladies' prayer meeting, so that was where Paul headed. Despite this unpromising beginning, this gathering became the nucleus of the first Christian church in Europe."
- Henry Morris

"During the years of captivity in Babylon, Jews established the custom of meeting by rivers (Ps 137:1) In their dispersion throughout the ancient world, Jews learned to find each other at a river, if there was no synagogue."
- Margaret Hess (U 22,25)

16. What does their willingness to teach a group of women say about this ministry? (How could they have been feeling at this point about being in Macedonia?)

- What does this say about the gospel? (See Galatians 3:28)

FYI: "The rabbis refused to teach women and generally assigned them a very inferior place." (Morris)
- David Guzik

17. List what you learn about Lydia from Acts 16:14.

FYI: Purple "dye was a secretion of a shellfish, which when crushed yielded the rich color. That color could vary all the way from blue-purple to scarlet...It might be immersed several times to make the color deeper. Of course it took a great many shellfish to dye a piece of cloth. The whole process was so costly that scarlet or purple could be worn only by kings or wealthy people. The color spoke of rank and nobility. Lydia was probably one of the most successful and influential women in Philippi. And God had prepared her heart for Paul."
- Margaret Hess (U 26)

18. List the ways Lydia responded to the Lord. 16:14c; 15

- What could she have been risking to take these stands?

19. Why might Paul have been hesitant to accept her offer of hospitality? (See 2 Corinthians 11:9; 1 Thessalonians 2:6,9)

- What cost and inconveniences would this have entailed? What kind of teaching would Lydia have been privileged to hear?

FYI: Persuaded/constrained NT:3849; *parabiazomai*; to force contrary to (nature), i.e. compel (by entreaty)
"She not only invited Paul and his co-workers to stay in her house. She constrained them, prevailed upon them, persuaded them. It's one thing to say, 'Stop in and see me sometime,' and something else to say, 'Come right now, today,' or to set a certain date. It's one thing to say to a sick person, 'Let me know if you need anything,' and something else to say, 'I'm bringing in a hot meal tonight.'"
- Margaret Hess (U 28)

Applying the Word: *In what ways do you like to show hospitality? What are some of the ways that you have seen people open up their home and hearts to others? What inconveniences did they encounter and what benefits did they reap?*

Day 3

Lydia's Continued Support. Read Acts 6:16-40

20. Read Acts 16:16-24. What happened to Paul and Silas after this? What do the accusations say about the opposition they were facing?

- What did Paul write about this later? 1 Thessalonians 2:2

FYI: "The evil spirit was not trying to draw people to God, but to cause confusion....The consequence of Paul's exorcism...led to their being beaten in public and imprisoned. Christian ministry inflicts losses on the evil one and he will not give in easily."
- The Africa Bible Commentary (1329)

"The continual harangue by the girl, referring to 'the most high God,' designed to produce ridicule and resentment against Paul, showed that her 'spirit of divination' was actually a demonic spirit. Compare the experience of Jesus, whom they recognized as God, with such evil spirits (e.g., Matthew 8:31-32; Mark 1:24)." - Henry Morris

"Paul was upset not because what the girl said was untrue, but because the girl was being viewed as the source of truth."
- The Nelson Study Bible (1851)

21. How did Paul and Silas respond to being beaten and imprisoned? Acts 16:25 (What do you think they were praying about?)

- What happened? What was unusual about this earthquake? 16:26
- What amazing things came out of this? 16:27-34

22. What happened the next day? 16:35,36 Why do you think the magistrates responded this way?

- How did Paul respond to their orders? 16:37 What information had Paul kept from the authorities? (Contrast Acts 22:25)

FYI: "Having just established a new church in Philippi, he didn't want the citizens to think that its founders were disreputable men. This illustrates the legitimacy of righteous social protest; Paul essentially conducted a sit-in against injustice."
- The Tony Evans Study Bible (1295)

23. How did the magistrates react to Paul's words? 16:38,39

FYI: "Once the magistrates learned that Paul and Silas were Romans citizens, they realized that they were in danger of the wrath of Rome. It was unlawful to whip a Roman citizen or deny that person the right to due process."
- The Nelson Study Bible (1851)

24. How would this sacrifice on Paul and Silas's part have served to protect the small group of believing women in the city? (i.e. What kind of leverage would this have given Paul if the magistrates went after them?)

- What does this say about Paul's love and willingness to sacrifice for these believers?

FYI: "Paul refused to leave when he had the opportunity **because he was protecting the infant church in Philippi**. Because Paul and Silas were beaten in public, people probably believed that they had done something wrong. If Paul left quietly, then the perception would be that those associated with him, in particular the members of the Philippian church, had also done something wrong." – The Nelson Study Bible (1851)

25. After Paul and Silas' release, what other actions did Lydia take? Acts 16:40 How much of a risk do you think she was taking?

Food for Thought: "Christ came first with Lydia. She turned over to Him everything she had – her house, her business, her privacy. Paul launched the whole missionary enterprise for Europe through one prepared heart – Lydia." – Margaret Hess (U 30)

26. From 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, what kind of relationship did the churches of Macedonia maintain with Paul? List the things Paul commended them for. Do you see the women of Philippi being a part of this?

Applying the Word: Who has a special place in your heart because of their witness, or their service and sacrifice for you? How did that impact your life?

Day 4

Priscilla. Read Acts 18

27. What cities did Paul travel to and minister in after Philippi? 17:1,10,15; 18:1

- What comments are made about other women in Macedonia? Acts 17:4,12,34

28. When Paul came to Corinth, what was his state of mind? 1 Corinthians 2:1-4

- How do you think he felt about the evil and decadence of this city? (see Acts 17:16)

FYI: "**Corinth** was a seaport city on the southern tip of Greece, a thriving metropolis with a population of half a million. It was an architectural showplace, the hub of the social and economic world...Because of the city's cosmopolitan and corrupt makeup, Corinthians were known for their competitive spirit and immorality. The very word "Corinthian" in fact was synonymous with drunkenness and immorality. In that first century day when Paul visited the city, there was one source of evil prevalent in Corinth of which the whole Western world took note. Above the city towered the Acropolis, on which stood the great temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. One thousand religious prostitutes were housed in that temple, and every evening they came down to walk the streets of the city."

- Ron Ritchie <https://cdn.pbc.org/>

"Corinth became a center of vice, a sailor's town where the lid was off...As Paul walked into a city famous throughout the Roman world for debauchery, he may have felt overwhelmed. Imagine his feelings as he wondered how he could work for Christ in such a place. Yet Paul believed that whatever God called him to do, He would make possible, step by step."

- Margaret Hess (U 122)

29. What do you learn about Aquilla and Priscilla in Acts 18:2?

- How did Paul become associated with them? 18:2b,3

Food for Thought: "We can picture the three in the tent shop, working away with their hands, and talking together. Paul must have shared with them hour after hour from the depths of his great soul. His words took root, grew, and blossomed in the lives of Aquilla and Priscilla."

- Margaret Hess (U 124)

30. What did Paul write about Aquila and Priscilla in Romans 16:3-5?

Digging Deeper

See other women that Paul commended in Romans 16.

- 16:1,2
- 16:6
- 16:7
- 16:12

31. Why do you think Paul worked as a tentmaker? (Compare Acts 20:30; 1 Thessalonians 2:9)

- What kind of ministry did he have? Acts 18:4

32. When Silas and Timothy came, what was Paul able to do? 18:5 Why? 2 Corinthians 11:9

33. How long did Paul stay in Corinth? 18:11

- What happened when Paul left? 18:18a

34. *Evidently Aquilla and Priscilla stayed on in Ephesus after Paul left Corinth (18:21). What influence did they have on Apollos? 18:24-27a Write out the phrases in 18:26-27 that describe their actions.*

“invited him to their home”

- How did Apollos help the churches in Achaia (western Greece)? 18:27b-28 What does this say about his response to Priscilla and Aquilla’s instruction.

FYI: “Because Apollos knew of the work of John the Baptist, it is likely that he preached that the Messiah had come and we must respond to him, but he probably had little knowledge of the *full* person and work of Jesus Christ.”
- David Guzik (See Mark 1:4,7,8)

35. Later when Paul returned to Ephesus and wrote a letter to Corinth, what do you find out about Aquilla and Priscilla? 1 Corinthians 16:19

FYI: “Later, [Priscilla and Aquilla] seem to be in Rome – perhaps due to relaxed restrictions of the Jews following Claudius’ death. ‘Greet Priscilla and Aquilla my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,’ wrote Paul in his letter to the Romans. (16:3) Still later they were back in Ephesus. When Paul wrote his very last letter, from the dungeon in Rome, he sent only two messages to friends. One of these he directed to this couple: ‘Greet Priscilla and Aquilla’ (2 Tim. 4:19)”
- Margaret Hess (U 127)

Applying the Word: *What picture do the lives of Lydia, Priscilla and Aquilla give you of believers working together in spreading the gospel? How important would you say they were to Paul’s ministry? How important were they to God?*