

## AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Turn to **Luke 8** and let's read the first **3** verses..... "Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with Him, along with some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Among them were **Mary Magdalene**, from whom he had cast out seven demons; **Joanna**, the wife of Chuza, Herod's business manager; **Susanna**; and many others who were contributing their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples."

Notice, *these women were helping to support Jesus **out of their own means***. One translation says, "Who ministered to and provided for Him out of their **own property and personal belongings**." What's quite obvious is that these women were women of substance, and they did three things with their resources; (1) they **supported**, (2) they **ministered** to [served], and (3) they **provided** for. Isn't this exactly what we should all be doing?

Back to those 3 verses in **Luke**... The question that arises is, Why? Why did these women demonstrate love and affection for Jesus? Why did they serve Him using their own property and personal belongings? I believe the key is held in the detail that is given concerning their previous state - who they were before meeting Jesus. Note, all three women were in need of **healing and deliverance**.

Therefore, the special love and concern they displayed must have been a response to Jesus setting them free. And this type of love and concern for Jesus was rooted in **gratitude**. Imagine how grateful Mary Magdalene must have been, having experienced deliverance from seven demons!

I'd also like you to observe how this *grateful love* repeatedly manifests itself after Mary had been freed from her terrible torment. And it continued even after the Lord's death! But first let me put an argument forward that may dispel some of the myths that have come to surround this unique woman (Mary Magdalene).

Speakers, writers, playwrights and novelists have created a fantasy that generally suggests a young and vivacious woman who had a doggy past and who held a romantic affection for Jesus. None of which is mentioned in the Bible. In fact, all these proposals are mere speculation, yet through frequent allusion or direct reference have taken on the appearance of fact. So what is true about Mary Magdalene?

She was one of a number of other women who constitute a part of the *support-team* that assisted Jesus in His ministry. And as we have just read, she had been delivered from demonic bondage, the nature of which is not revealed. Therefore, one might say; she was a very grateful soul. The fact that the other women with whom she kept company were all older women supports the reasoning that she too was more mature (rather than young and vivaciously attractive).

Furthermore, it is foolish to conclude that her emotional movement toward greeting Jesus with an embrace following His resurrection suggest anything other than the most logical response of joy at seeing Him alive. And Jesus' directive that she should not do so was not due to anything unworthy or sinful in her approach. Rather, the Lord's words imply some yet uncompleted aspect of His post-crucifixion mission.

Mary Magdalene was a faithful, steadfast disciple of Jesus who constantly displayed genuine concern and affection for Him. She is best seen as a case study of how no dimension of satanic bondage can prohibit anyone from being released to fruitful service in God's Kingdom.

Clearly, from scripture we can see that Mary served the Lord in a very remarkable way, and that this service was both devotional and practical. She did not allow anything to come between her and her service to Jesus - not even death! She was always truly grateful - and truly faithful!

For the record, here are 7 things she did:

- \* She was a witness to the crucifixion and at first watched from a distance (Matthew 27:56).
- \* She stood at the cross when Jesus spoke to His mother for the last time (John 19:25).
- \* She remained at the cross until all was over and waited for the Lord's body to be taken down (Mark 15:47).

\* With Salome and Mary mother of James, she brought sweet spices so that they might anoint Jesus' body (Mark 16:1).

\* She entered the tomb and found it empty and saw an angel dressed in a white robe sitting there (Mark 16:5)

\* She was among the first to hear the angelic announcement that Jesus is risen (Mark 16:6).

\* She was the first person to actually talk with Jesus after the resurrection (John 20:14,15).

What does this all mean? Well, it confirms that gratitude has its rewards, but also that it is important to be grateful when serving the Lord (and others).

**Colossians 3:16, "Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom He gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with grateful hearts."**

Being grateful to God is a lifestyle! **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18:** says, **"Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."** The will of God is that we rejoice and be filled with gratitude; and we are to give thanks for EVERYTHING. Everything means just that, we are to give thanks for everything, not just the good things.

A young child always wants to eat candy for dinner, but the parents will probably not allow it to do so. Yet, the child does not understand why he can't have candy all the time. It is however, for his own good. Likewise, we may not understand why we are going through a specific trial or tribulation, but if God is allowing it, then like the child who can't eat candy for dinner, it may also be for our own ultimate good. We should remind ourselves to be grateful, even when we do not understand the reason behind our problem.

Jesus Himself talks about the **gratitude** we need to show during difficult times: **Matthew 5:11 – 12:** " *Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. **Rejoice and be glad**, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*" When we face test and trials we are to be grateful as the rewards we will receive are great.

Being grateful is not only one of God's requirements for us. It is also for our own good - our own benefit! You will never be dissatisfied with your lot in life if you are thankful for all you already have. And I'm sure you can find many things to be grateful for!

*"Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow."*

Therefore, in all things be grateful! It is a lifestyle that the three women who served Jesus demonstrated wherever they went and in whatever they did. And it caused them to be blessed! Developing an attitude of sincere gratitude for your current blessings unleashes the power for receiving many more.

Every Day Give Thanks.