



*The
Worthy Woman's
Handbook*

Michelle Thompson

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Spiritbuilding
PUBLISHERS

*By
Michelle Thompson*

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Published by
Spiritbuilding Publishers
9700 Ferry Road, Waynesville, OH 45068

(800) 282-4901

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ISBN: 978-1-955285-41-4

Printed in the USA by D & E Printing, Brownsburg, IN
dandepublishing.com

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Letter from the Author

Dear Reader,

In 2017 I decided to create a resource for the young women I was teaching in a weekly Bible class in my home; a resource designed specifically for women. I used the following criteria when choosing which scriptures to include in this book:

- scriptures from the book of Proverbs and the New Testament which include words that are also used to describe the Proverbs 31 woman (for example “dignity,” Prov. 31:25)
- scriptures from the New Testament with instructions specifically to women
- scriptures from the New Testament with instructions to Christians, in general, which provide more information on the same topics as the specific instructions to women
- examples of women providing positive examples from the Old and New Testaments, as well as a few examples of unworthy women from which we can learn good lessons

This book is not necessarily meant to be read from front to back. It is meant to be a tool for you to refer to as you seek God’s wisdom and instruction regarding the various roles you fill as a woman. While I have tried to be thorough, this book is not meant to be an exhaustive resource on any subject. Therefore, I have provided space on the corresponding sides of each page for you to add your thoughts and additional scripture related to each topic as you study God’s Word.

I imagine this book will be most helpful to teenagers, young women, newly married, new mothers and new converts, but I hope it is helpful to women of all ages and circumstances. It is my prayer that this book will be a handy tool for you as you study the Word of God and while you are on your journey to becoming a Worthy Woman.

A special note of thanks to my husband, Jeff Thompson. He has been my best friend for most of my life and he has lovingly supported me and encouraged me through the writing of this book. He has also given me invaluable input on some of the more difficult passages of scripture and even provided technical support on a few occasions.

Sisterly,

Michelle Thompson

*“The Lord bless you, and keep you; the Lord make His face shine on you,
and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance on you,
and give you peace” (Numbers 6:24–26).*

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Word Study

The majority of information is from Strong's Greek and Hebrew Dictionary. When indicated with "Vine's", information is taken from *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* by W. E. Vine or "Gesenius", taken from *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* by H. W. F. Gesenius

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This Handbook is dedicated to all the "Worthy Women" in my Life

Francis Mann—My grandmother; the perfect preacher's wife and a true lady.

Billie Mann—My mother; the perfect hostess; she taught me about being hospitable.

Sheryl (Mann) Nix—My sister; one of the strongest and most courageous women I know.

Betty Thompson—My mother-in-law; a wise teacher, her people became my people.

Becky Keith—My best friend for over 35 years who has been with me through all of life's trials and loved me, just as I am.

Genevieve Payne—My Titus two mentor who taught me by her example how to be a wife, how to teach children's Bible classes, and how to serve my brethren.

Sharon DeBerry and Yvonne Streeter—Two "best friends" who took me under their wings, included me in their friendship and shared with me their love of the scriptures.

Jennifer Thompson and Jasmin Thompson—My faithful and loving daughters-in-law/love; truly and literally an answer to my prayers for Godly wives for my two sons.

My "Little Sisters" who have lovingly supported me throughout the years:

Devon Alpert / Deban Becker / Hannah Bennett / Jana Enos / Andrea Hall

Sarah Hudgins / Sarah Knapp / Michelle Peterson / Amber Raif / Natalie Sanchez / Gin Wells

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Section 1

*Worthy Women
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Chapter 1

The Gospels

Elizabeth, Mother of John the Baptist

Read: Luke 1:5–7

“Righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly”

Zacharias and Elizabeth have an honor bestowed on a small percentage of people in both the Old and New Testaments; they are referred to as “righteous” and “blameless.”

- *Noah*: “a righteous man, blameless in his time” (Gen. 6:9)
- *Abraham*: “believed in the Lord and He reckoned it to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6)
- *Moses*: “He is faithful in all My household” (Num. 12:7)
- *Joseph (husband of Mary)*: “a righteous man” (Matt. 1:19)
- *Job*: “blameless, upright, fearing God” (Job 1:1)
- *Cornelius*: “a righteous and God-fearing man” (Acts 10:22)
- *David*: “a man after My heart, who will do all My will” (Acts 13:22)
- *Abel*: “offered to God a better sacrifice . . . through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous” (Heb. 11:4)
- *Lot*: God “rescued righteous Lot” (2 Pet. 2:7–8)

One day the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias when he was burning incense in the temple at Jerusalem (one of his priestly duties). Zacharias became frightened but the angel spoke to him saying, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.” The angel then told Zacharias that his son would be “great in the sight of the Lord” and will “make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:8–17).

When Zacharias’ priestly duties were finished, he went back home and his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant. “And she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying, “This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men” (Luke 1:23–25).

“He looked with favor upon me”

This one statement tells us so much about Elizabeth. She was an older woman who had suffered the heartache of being unable to have children. She had also suffered “disgrace among men” for being barren (either real or imagined) and yet, she had not grown bitter and resentful toward God but remained “righteous in the sight of God.”

During Elizabeth’s confinement, her niece Mary (the mother of Jesus) came to visit. “When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And she cried out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And

Historical Notes—Luke 1

Elizabeth and Zacharias were both descendants of Aaron, Moses’ brother (1 Chron. 24:1–19).

Gabriel is the same angel who appeared before Mary, foretelling the birth of Jesus in Luke 1:26. Gabriel is also mentioned in the book of Daniel, chapters 8 and 9.

how has it happened to me that the mother of my Lord would come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy” (Luke 1:39–44).

“The baby leaped in my womb”

This must have been a comforting event for both of these women. Elizabeth was thrilled to be visited by “the mother of my Lord.” Mary received further confirmation from the Holy Spirit that she carried the “Son of God.” She witnessed God’s great power; if God could make a barren womb bring forth life, He could also bring life to the womb of a virgin!

“Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth and she gave birth to a son.” (Luke 1:57)

On the eighth day after their son’s birth, Zacharias and Elizabeth took him to be circumcised. Their relatives and neighbors assumed they would name the boy, “Zacharias” after his father. “But his mother answered and said, “No indeed; but he shall be called John” (Luke 1:58–60).

“No indeed; but he shall be called John”

Elizabeth remembered Gabriel’s instructions (verse 13) and named her son, “John.” His name would be a perpetual reminder of God’s gracious gift to her and her husband in their old age.

Historical Note—Luke 1:58–60

In the covenant God made with Abraham, He commanded every male child to be circumcised on the eighth day after their birth as a “sign of the covenant” (Gen. 17:1–14).

Names Have Meaning
Luke 1:57

John—“Jehovah is a gracious giver”

Five Women Are in the Lineage of Christ

In Matthew 1:1–16, we read about the genealogy of Jesus. Genealogies in the Old Testament are always followed through the line of the father (Gen. 5, 10; 1 Chron. 1–8). Matthew breaks with this tradition and lists five women who are in the lineage of Christ. The fact that these women are included in the lineage of Jesus is remarkable. God often chooses the most humble of people and circumstances to bring forth His plans.

1. Tamar, daughter-in-law of Judah (Gen. 38:6; 1 Chron. 2:4)
2. Rahab, the harlot of Jericho (Josh. 2:1–14; 6:17, 22–25; Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25)
3. Ruth, the Moabite (The book of Ruth)
4. Bathsheba, wife of King David, mother of Solomon (2 Sam. 11:3–12:24)
5. Mary (The Four Gospels)

Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Read: Luke 1:26–28

Mary was understandably “perplexed” by Gabriel’s greeting, so he said, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.” Mary asked, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” Gabriel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you,



and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God. And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month. For nothing will be impossible with God.” And Mary said, *“Behold, the bond slave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word”* (Luke 1:29–38).

“Nothing will be impossible with God”

When Mary asked, “How can this be?”, she must have been thinking to herself, “This is impossible!” So, what does God do? He tells her what she needs to hear to help her to understand; He tells her that “even” her Aunt Elizabeth, who is old and barren, is pregnant!

“May it be done to me according to your word”

When Mary received the news that the “Son of God” would come forth from her womb, her response was simply, “may it be done to me according to your word.” Her humble heart is further revealed when she refers to herself as “the bond slave of the Lord.”

Read: Matthew 1:18–19

“Planned to send her away secretly”

Joseph’s response to the news that Mary was with child gives us an indication of the possible ramifications of Gabriel’s announcement. Joseph had the right, by Mosaic law, to put Mary away publicly since she was found to be with child *before* they had come together as man and wife (Deut. 24:1). In Bible times, women were dependent on men for their survival. In addition to living the rest of her life with the “disgrace” of being an immoral woman with a child born out of wedlock, Mary most likely would have lived the rest of her life in deep poverty (for what man would want to marry such a woman).

Read: Matthew 1:20–21, 24–25

After Mary’s conversation with the angel, she “went in a hurry” to Judah to visit her Aunt Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s voice, she was filled with the Holy Spirit and she blessed Mary. Mary responded by praising God (Luke 1:39–55).

“My soul exalts the Lord”

Even though it is evident Mary comprehended the honor that was being bestowed upon her (“from this time on all generations will count me blessed”) she did not respond with, “Yes, I am blessed! I worked hard serving the Lord; I studied, memorized the scriptures and I prayed three times a day and look how the Lord has rewarded me!” No, not Mary; the first words from her lips were, “My soul

Historical Note—
Matthew 1:18

In the Jewish culture of the first century, betrothal was considered the first stage of marriage; the woman was considered the man’s wife and the man was considered the woman’s husband, even though the woman may stay in her father’s house up to one year (Deut. 22:23–27).

Prophecy Fulfilled—
Matthew 1:18–25

The prophet Isaiah prophesied of Jesus being born of a virgin over 700 years before Christ was born. (Isa. 7:14).

Geographical Note—Luke 2

The distance between Nazareth and Bethlehem is about 70 miles. Luke 2:4 says Joseph “went up from Galilee” indicating the terrain was hilly, so Mary’s journey included some hiking. Samaria lay along the most direct route but since the Jews of Jesus’ time had nothing to do with the Samaritans, Joseph and Mary may have journeyed around Samaria. Their journey may have lasted a total of seven to ten days, so they would have taken advantage of the hospitality offered to them by Jews living in various villages along the way.

Historical Notes—Lk. 2:21–24

Circumcision: A sign of the covenant between God and Abraham and all of Abraham’s descendants (Gen. 17).

Days of Purification: Under the Law of Moses, when a woman gave birth, she was deemed “unclean” for a period of time, after which she would go to the temple and offer a sacrifice for her purification” (Lev. 12: 1–8).

Law of the Firstborn Male: This law goes back to the tenth plague God brought upon Egypt when Pharaoh refused to let His people leave Egypt (Exod. 11:1–13:15; Num. 3:13; 8:17; 18:15; Lev. 27:26).

exalts the Lord” and then she spoke of how her spirit was rejoicing because God “has had regard for the humble state of His bond slave.” Then, she proceeded to praise God and proclaim His “mighty deeds.” Is it any wonder the Lord chose Mary to bring the Christ Child into the world?

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for “three months” and then she returned to her home in Nazareth (Luke 1:56). Sometime toward the end of Mary’s pregnancy, Caesar Augustus sent out a decree that everyone was to register for a census, “each to his own city.” So Joseph and Mary traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem because Joseph “was of the house and family of David.” Imagine taking a seven-day journey, on foot, in the last stages of pregnancy!

Read: Luke 2:1–7

“There was no room for them in the inn”

Joseph and Mary finally made it to Bethlehem. While they were there registering for the census, Mary went into labor. Not only did she have to give birth while she was away from home, there was no bed in which to do her labors and no crib for her newborn baby.

After Jesus’ birth, an angel appeared to some shepherds in the area who were keeping watch over their flock. Read Luke 2:8–12.

The shepherds immediately began looking and found their way to Mary and Joseph. When they saw the Child, they began telling his parents everything that the angel told them about Him. “And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart” (see Luke 2:15–19).

“The things which were told them by the shepherds”

Here is a recap of what Gabriel revealed about Jesus to Mary (and Joseph):

- He is the “Son of the Most High” (Luke 1:32)
- God will give him the “throne of His father David” (Luke 1:32)
- “He will reign over the house of Jacob forever” (Luke 1:33)
- “His kingdom will have no end” (Luke 1:33)
- “He was conceived by the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:20)
- “He will save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21)

When the shepherds told Joseph and Mary what the angel had revealed to them about their son, it confirmed everything the angel Gabriel had told them.

“Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart”

Of course she did! She knew her baby was the Son of God. Did she understand completely at this point that her son would one day give up his life for the world? We do not know but she definitely contemplated these events as they happened and I believe she knew enough to “treasure” each moment she had with Jesus.

Read: Luke 2:21–24

“They brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord”

Joseph and Mary left Bethlehem and traveled a short distance to Jerusalem where they offered a sacrifice in the temple according to the Law of Moses.

While Joseph and Mary were in the temple making their offering, a man named Simeon, a righteous and devout man who was filled with the Holy Spirit, took Jesus into his arms and said, “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” Joseph and Mary were amazed by the things Simeon said of Jesus (Luke 2:25–33).



“His father and mother were amazed”

Clearly, Joseph and Mary did not yet fully understand the magnitude of the gift their son was to the world. They knew He was the Son of God but may not have understood His role as Savior to the entire world, including the Gentiles!

Sometime after Jesus was born, “magi from the east” who had been following a star, arrived in Jerusalem looking for the newborn “King of the Jews.” When King Herod heard about the magi’s inquiry, he called them to him and asked them where “the Messiah was to be born.” The magi told him, “Bethlehem of Judea” and then they quoted the prophecy of His birth from Micah 5:2. Herod questioned the magi further to find out “the exact time the star appeared.” Then he sent the magi to Bethlehem instructing them to find the Child and then report back to him. The magi continued on their journey, following the same star they had seen in the east “until it came and stood over the place where the Child was” (Matt. 2:1–9).

Read: Matthew 2:10–15a

“They fell to the ground and worshiped Him”

First, shepherds visited Mary and Joseph and relayed to them what they had heard about their child. Then Simeon blessed Jesus and prophesied concerning Him; and then finally, Magi from the east came to worship Jesus and brought Him gifts. This series of amazing events must have been a little overwhelming for a young mother to experience!

“Left for Egypt”

Joseph and Mary were on the move again, this time they traveled from Bethlehem down to Egypt (at least 200 miles, depending where they settled in Egypt). This time, instead of carrying her baby in her womb, Mary was carrying Jesus in her arms.

“He remained there until the death of Herod”

Joseph, Mary and Jesus stayed in Egypt until King Herod died; most historians

Interesting Note—Matt. 2:1–12

The Shepherds who came to see the Christ Child, saw Him when He was still in the “manger” (Luke 2:16).

Matthew 2:11 says the magi saw him in a “house”; therefore, Joseph and Mary had found lodging in a house by the time the wise men from the east came to worship Jesus.

Prophecy Fulfilled—Matt. 2:15

The prophet Hosea, prophesied of Joseph, Mary and Jesus’ flight to Egypt over 700 years before Christ was born (Hos. 11:1).

believe he died in 4 B.C. Since we do not know the exact date of Jesus' birth, their stay in Egypt could have lasted a few months or as long as two years.

When Herod died, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to "Take the Child and His mother, and go into the land of Israel; for those who sought the Child's life are dead." So Joseph, Mary and Jesus traveled to the land of Israel. On their way there, Joseph received a warning from God in a dream that he should go to Galilee instead, and so they settled in Nazareth (Matt. 2:19–23). Finally, Joseph and Mary were back home in Nazareth. They had come full circle and had experienced some amazing things during their time away from home.

Historical Note—Luke 2:41

The Feast of the Passover was held every year to commemorate an event that took place when God delivered His people out of Egyptian bondage. To learn more about the Feast of the Passover and the event it memorializes, read Exod. 12:1–30.

The next time we read about Mary is when Jesus was twelve years old.

Read: Luke 2:41–42

"His parents went to Jerusalem every year"

God commanded the Israelites saying, "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord God" (Ex. 23:17). Devout Jews traveled to Jerusalem for the following feasts (Ex. 23:14–16):

1. Feast of Unleavened Bread ("Passover", 2 Chron. 35:17)
2. Feast of the Harvest ("Feast of Weeks", Deut. 16:16)
3. Feast of the Ingathering ("Feast of Booths", Deut. 16:16)

The fact that Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem every year for the Feast of the Passover shows their devotion to God.

As they were on their way home and after traveling all day, they began to look for Jesus amongst their friends and relatives, unaware that He had stayed in Jerusalem. When they could not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for Him. Finally, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting with the teachers, listening to them and asking questions (Luke 2:43–46).

Read: Luke 2:48–52

"Son, why have you treated us this way?"

This brief view of a day in the life of the twelve-year-old Jesus is interesting. We get an inside look at the type of relationship Joseph and Mary had with Jesus. They loved Jesus and felt a responsibility toward Him as all parents do; they also expected a level of respect and obedience from their son, as all parents should.

"He continued in subjection to them"

This is an amazing statement! Jesus, the Son of God, to whom God had given "all authority on heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18) and to whom God "put all things in subjection under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:27), submitted Himself to Joseph and Mary while He was a child in their home. Even in this, Jesus set the perfect example of a child "honoring father and mother" (Ex. 20:12).

The next time we read about Mary, twenty–seven years have passed. Jesus is thirty years old and it is the beginning of His “ministry” (Luke 3:23). Jesus, His mother and His disciples were all invited to a wedding in Cana of Galilee. At some point during the celebration, the wine ran out and Mary said to Jesus, “They have no wine” (John 2:1–3).

Read: John 2:4–12

“Whatever He says to you, do it”

This dialog between Jesus and His mother always makes me smile. Look at Mary’s confidence in Jesus’ ability to take care of the situation. Even though this is “the beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee” His mother knew He was more than able to take care of the problem. Jesus put up a little resistance, which Mary ignored! How enlightening this scene is! It shows the honor Jesus bestowed on His mother to the point that she does not even question whether her wishes will be obeyed by her thirty-year-old son.

“Woman”

In today’s vernacular, addressing a female as “woman” would be considered a derogatory term. This is not the case when our Lord and Savior addressed His Mother this way. How can we know this for sure? We have already established that Jesus honored His father and mother by being in subjection to them. Publicly disrespecting His mother would be contrary to His character as seen throughout His life and ministry throughout the Gospels. It also would have placed Jesus in direct disobedience to one of God’s laws; “Honor your father and your mother” (Ex. 20:12).

There are two more times Mary is mentioned before the scene at the cross of Jesus.

Mark 6:1–3 records an event when Jesus was teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath in His hometown of Nazareth (cp. Matt. 13:54–58)

“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?”

This passage reveals much about the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. After Jesus was born, Mary gave birth to four more sons, as well as more than one daughter, so there were at least nine in their household. Like Joseph, Jesus was a carpenter by trade. Imagine Mary watching Joseph and Jesus work side by side during the years before Jesus began His ministry.

Read: Luke 8:19–21 (cp. Matt. 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35).

“Your mother . . . standing outside, wishing to see You”

Joseph is not mentioned in this passage, nor is he mentioned as being present in any future events in Jesus’ life. It is probable that Mary was widowed by the time Jesus started His public ministry.

Finally, we come to the cross.

“Standing by the cross of Jesus”

Mary was “blessed among women”, yet she remained humble. She quietly “treasured in her heart” the events of Jesus’ life as they unfolded before her. Then, Mary silently watched as her son was crucified, one of the cruelest deaths imaginable. She did not cry out in His defense, nor did she complain aloud regarding His cruel treatment as any mother would (either a mother of a guilty son or a mother of an innocent son). She responded like a mother who knew her son was who He said He was; the Savior of the world. She responded with quiet dignity, supporting her son by the only means possible, by remaining within His line of sight as He suffered.

“Behold, your mother!”

What a beautiful scene! Jesus wanted to ensure the welfare of His mother after His death, so He entrusted her care to His beloved John, “the disciple whom He loved.” It is interesting that Jesus calls on John to take care of His mother instead of His own brothers. This shows Jesus’ trust and confidence in John, who did not disappoint since “from that hour . . . he took her into his own household.”

Historical Note—John 4

The Jews of Jesus’ day did not mingle with the people of Samaria. To learn why, read Ezra 4 and 2 Kings 17.

Mary is mentioned once more in Acts—after Jesus’ ascension, His remaining eleven apostles return to Jerusalem. “These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers” (Acts 1:14).

I love the fact that the last we read of Mary, she is with the disciples (and her sons), devoting herself to prayer! What a comfort it must have been to Mary to be surrounded by her physical family and her spiritual family in the days, weeks and months following Jesus’ death on the cross.

Geographical Note—Jn. 4:20

“Our fathers worshiped in this mountain”—Samaria was located in the Central Mountain range of Palestine, between the Coastal Plain and the Jordan Valley. The two highest mountains were Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim. Joshua built an altar to the Lord on Mount Ebal, according to the commandment of Moses and the people “offered burnt offerings on it to the Lord” (Josh. 8:30–35).

The Samaritan Woman at the Well

Read: John 4:7–15

“You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You?”

This plucky Samaritan woman was humble yet bold enough to ask questions. Although she was a Jew by birth, the Jewish community did not accept her because of her mixed heritage. Obviously, when she first met Jesus, she did not know who He was!

“Sir, give me this water”

At this point, the woman was still thinking physical, not spiritual, but Jesus certainly had her attention! She was very interested in this “living water” since she had to “come all the way here to draw.” She would have been carrying a heavy stone pot or jar to get water once or twice a day. Of course, the trip home would be more challenging with a pot full of water.

Jesus then told the woman to go and tell her husband to come to Him but she told Jesus she had no husband. Jesus acknowledged that she had told Him the truth and revealed He knew she had, in fact, had five husbands and the one she had now was not her husband. When the woman heard Jesus' words she said, "Sir, I perceive You are a prophet! Our fathers worshiped in this mountain and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4:16–20).

Read: John 4:21–26

"I know that Messiah is coming"

This woman knew the history of her people and the Old Testament prophecies regarding the coming Messiah and she was waiting for "that One" to come. When Jesus told her that He was the One she was waiting for, she left her water pot and returned to the city to spread the good news! "Come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?" They went out of the city, and were coming to Him" (John 4:27–30).

This unnamed woman heard the gospel; she believed, and then she influenced many others who then came and heard and believed. "From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all the things that I have done'" (John 4:39).

Mary Magdalene

Read: Luke 8:1–3

"Mary . . . from whom seven demons had gone out"

We really do not know much about Mary Magdalene. Was she a godly woman before she was demon-possessed? Even if she was, she could have carried a lot of shame regarding the time she was demon-possessed. The scriptures describe the demon-possessed as "exceedingly violent" (Matt. 8:28), and having "terrible convulsions" (Mark 9:17–29).

What we do know is that Mary Magdalene did not let shame of her past paralyze her; she dedicated her life to serving her Lord and Savior, and Jesus welcomed her into His inner circle! Mary Magdalene lived her life like the Apostle Paul, "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13–14).

"Contributing to their support out of their private means"

These generous women funded Jesus' ministry with their own money. Were these women independently wealthy? The scriptures do not reveal any more detail but, oh, what a privilege this was for these women!

Mary Magdalene is mentioned in conjunction with various other women throughout the Gospels. Her story cannot be told without telling theirs so all these women are grouped together in this section on Mary Magdalene.

The following verses record women witnessing Jesus' crucifixion.

- Matthew 27:55–56
- Mark 15:40–41
- Luke 23:49
- John 19:25

“They used to follow Him and minister to Him”

The word “ministering” in these passages is from the same Greek word (*diakoneo*) used in Matthew 25:44 where Jesus teaches about the Judgment Day, saying that those who do not “take care of” the hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, etc. will not receive eternal life. This same Greek word is also rendered as “serving tables” in Acts 6:2. So, Mary Magdalene, as well as several other women, followed Jesus and His disciples and provided for their physical needs, such as food and clothing, while they traveled throughout Palestine during the three years of Jesus' ministry.

The women who are named as witnessing Jesus' crucifixion:

1. Mary Magdalene
2. Mary the mother of James and Joseph
3. the mother of the sons of Zebedee
4. Salome
5. Mary, the wife of Clopas (who is also the sister of the mother of Jesus)
6. Mary, the mother of Jesus

Historical Note—Mk. 15:42–46;
Lk. 23:55–56

It seems it was a custom of the Jews at this time to prepare a body for burial by binding it with linens, and then dousing the bound body with spices and perfumes. When Jesus was anointed with costly perfume by a woman a week prior to his crucifixion, he said of her, “For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial” (Matt. 26:12; cf. John 19:39–40)

Following Jesus' death, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. When Pilate had confirmed Jesus was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Joseph then took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped Him in a linen cloth, laid Him in a tomb and then rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb (Mark 15:42–46).

Read: Mark 15:47 (cp. Matt. 27:57–61; Luke 23:50–55)

Mary Magdalene and many other women followed and served Jesus throughout His ministry; from Galilee to the cross to the tomb. I can imagine seeing these faithful women sitting and watching over Jesus' grave like quiet sentinels; watching over his body in death as they had followed and served Him during His life.

Read: Luke 23:55–56; 24:1 (cp. Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1)

“On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment”

It must have been hard for these women to wait an entire day to attend to the body of Jesus but they obeyed the command to “rest on the Sabbath” according to the Law of Moses (Ex. 20:8–11). As soon as dawn broke the next day, they were at the tomb with the spices they had prepared at the end of the previous day.

Read: John 20:11–18 (cp. Matt. 28:1–10; Mark 16:1–11; Luke 24:1–10)

Luke 24:10 mentions other women who were with Mary Magdalene at the tomb the morning of the first day of the week. “Now they were Mary Magdalene and

Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.”

“Supposing Him to be the gardener”

At first, Mary did not recognize her risen Savior, but when Jesus spoke her name, she responded with “Rabboni”, showing she finally understood the man she was speaking to was Jesus, her Teacher, Lord and Master.

“Stop clinging to Me”

Matthew 28:9–10 records that when Jesus appeared to Mary, she “took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.” Jesus told her, “stop clinging to Me.” It was time for Mary to let Jesus go; the time for clinging to Jesus’ earthly body was past. Mary needed to be about the business of spreading the news of Jesus’ resurrection and Jesus would be traveling quickly, miraculously going from place to place to see and encourage as many people as He could during the forty days He would remain on earth before His ascension (Acts 1:1–9).

“Go to My brethren”

Jesus ignored the social customs of the day (per usual as when He ate with sinners, Luke 5:30), and chose a woman (and the other women who were at His tomb) to be the first witness to His resurrection and to spread the word to His “brethren.” Mark 16:10–11 says that when Mary first reported to the disciples what she had seen and heard, “they refused to believe it.” They had to see the empty tomb for themselves (Luke 24:10–12).

Mary Magdalene (and the other women mentioned with her), had followed Jesus as He traveled from city to city, “ministering to Him.” Some of them “were contributing to their support out of their private means.” They were with him early in His ministry and they remained with Him; standing by the cross as He was crucified and visiting his tomb after His death. Some of these women, because of their faithful devotion in visiting Jesus’ tomb, were privileged to be the first to see and speak to Him after His resurrection!

The women who are named as visiting Jesus’ tomb:

1. Mary Magdalene (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10; John 20:1)
2. Mary, the mother of James and Joseph (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10)
3. Salome (Mark 16:1)
4. Joanna (Luke 24:10)

Mary and Martha Sisters of Lazarus

Read: Luke 10:38–42

“Martha, Martha”

We just read about Mary Magdalene and several other women who followed Jesus and “ministered” to Him. The same root word that is used to describe what these women did for Jesus (“ministered,” *diakoneo*) is used to describe what Martha was

Word Study

Welcomed: (v. 38) Greek—*hypodechomai* (verb), “receive, to receive as a guest”

Distracted: (v. 40) Greek—*perispao* (verb), “cumber, to be distracted, to be over-occupied, too busy”

Preparations: (v. 40) Greek—*diakonia* (noun), “ministry, ministrations, ministering, service”

Worried: (v. 41) Greek—*merimnao* (verb), “take thought, to be troubled with cares, to care for, look out for”

Bothered: (v. 41) Greek—*thorybeo* (verb), “make ado, to make a noise or uproar, trouble one’s self”

doing for Jesus (“preparations,” *diakonia*). So why did Jesus rebuke Martha? It is not that Martha had chosen a bad thing to do, for *someone* had to do the cooking, serving and cleaning up.

Martha was “distracted”: Could Martha have spent less time and effort on her meal “preparations”? Probably. Have you ever gone overboard with your preparations for company coming for dinner? You work so hard all day cleaning the house and making an elaborate meal that you are exhausted by the time your guests show up for dinner. I know I have been guilty of this, especially when I was younger. Somewhere along the way I realized I was placing too much importance on the way my home looked and how the meal tasted. I wanted everything to be perfect; and maybe it was, but at what cost? I was missing what was important; spending time getting to know my guests and enjoying their company. Martha mistakenly placed her focus on the “serving”, instead of focusing on the One she was serving!

Martha was “worried and bothered”: Martha had a lot on her mind! Was Martha doing more than was necessary (“so many things”) because she was trying to impress Jesus? If Jesus came to stay with you in your home for a few days, how would you react? Do you think you might get a little frantic trying to give Jesus your very best?

Geographical Note—John 11

John 10:40 provides Jesus’ general location at the time He received word from Mary and Martha that Lazarus was sick: “He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing and He was staying there.”

The term, “Beyond the Jordan” refers to the east side of the Jordan River. Bethany, where Mary and Martha lived was on the west side of the Jordan River, near Jerusalem.

“Only one thing is necessary”: Martha was a little too busy. She was worried and bothered by a multitude of things, but Jesus told her she missed the “one thing” that was necessary . . . spending time with Him!

“The good part”: Mary chose to spend her time sitting and Jesus’ feet “listening” to Him, while Martha chose to spend her time “serving” Jesus. In comparison, Mary’s choice was “good” and Jesus was not going to “take that away from her” by telling her to help her sister in the kitchen.

Read: John 11:1–16

“The sisters sent word to Him”

When Lazarus became sick his sisters knew exactly what they needed to do; they needed to tell Jesus. So they sent word to Him. I find it interesting that they knew where He was at the time they needed Him even though He was traveling around and they did not have the means of communication we do today. Could this be an indication that Jesus often sent word to this family of His whereabouts?

“He whom You love is sick”

The message Martha and Mary sent to Jesus was short and to the point; “He whom You love is sick.” The scriptures do not reveal if there was anything else included in their message to Jesus such as, “Please come quickly!” Could this possibly be an indication of the close relationship these three had with Jesus? It seems the sisters assumed Jesus would come as soon as he heard the news about Lazarus.

“Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus”

What an amazing statement! Jesus (God) loves everyone, right? Obviously, Jesus (the man) had a close relationship with this family.

By the time Jesus and His disciples arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days (John 11:17).

Read: John 11:20–29

“Lord, if you had been here”

Martha knew Jesus could have prevented her brother’s death, if only He had been there. Mary echoed her sister’s sentiments saying that she, too, believed her brother would not have died if Jesus had only been there. Even more amazing is that after Lazarus had died, Martha was confident that if Jesus asked God to raise her brother from the dead, He would do it. Jesus understood what she was asking of Him and He already knew what He was going to do. “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep” (John 11:11).

“Do you believe this?”

Jesus, the Master Teacher, took advantage of this situation to have a teachable moment with Martha. He told her that Lazarus would rise again and Martha confessed her belief that Lazarus would rise “on the last day.” But when Jesus further explained that “everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die” and asked Martha if she believed this; Martha gave Jesus an indirect answer. Martha confessed her belief that Jesus was the “Son of God” but she did not answer His question.

Read: John 11:30–45

“Did I not say to you that if you believe?”

When Jesus finally arrived at Lazarus’ tomb, He said, “Remove the stone.” Martha spoke up and expressed her concern over the “stench” that would come forth from the grave when the stone was removed. Although Martha believed Jesus was the Son of God and that God would do whatever Jesus asked of Him, when the moment came, her faith waivered. Jesus’ response to Martha, “Did I not say to you that if you believe” is evidence of Martha’s lack of faith in this moment. Martha was a real person, a woman who believed in Jesus and was privileged to know Him and serve Him in person. Just like Peter who walked on the water with Jesus but then started to sink when he saw the waves and began to doubt (Matt. 14:22–32), Martha had a moment when she doubted. Take courage, dear sister, in women like Martha, who did not always make the best choices in her service to God and who sometimes doubted, but kept serving and believing! Most importantly, be encouraged by the fact that Jesus did not reject Martha for her momentary lack of faith.

Read: John 12:1–8

“Martha was serving”

Again, we see that Martha was the one doing the “serving.” Although her service to Jesus is understated in comparison to the attention given to Mary’s anointing

of Jesus, I find it interesting that John, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, made a point to mention Mary was “serving.”

“Mary . . . wiped His feet with her hair”

Once again, Mary had chosen “the good part” and Jesus said, “Let her alone.”

Woman Who Had a Hemorrhage for Twelve Years

Read: Mark 5:25–34 (Matt. 9:20–22; Luke 8:43–48)

“A woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years”

This poor woman had suffered so much! Not only had she suffered for twelve years from her illness, she had also suffered from the various treatments she had received from her physicians. She had spent a lot of money on these treatments but instead of getting better, she was worse off than when the illness began. How desperate she must have been!

“If I just touch His garments, I shall get well”

Matthew’s account of this event says this woman “came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak” (Matt. 9:20); she did not even make contact with His person, only His clothes. This humble woman was trying not to bring any attention to herself; she just wanted to be healed.

“Who touched My garments?”

“When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed” (Luke 8:47). When it was obvious Jesus knew someone had touched his clothing, the woman finally made herself known, but she did so trembling with fear! How courageous this woman was! Remember, courage is not the lack of fear, but the fortitude to do something even though it frightens you. This frightened, yet courageous woman, told Jesus and all the people present “the whole truth” about why she had touched Him and how he had been healed.

“Your faith has made you well”

This woman heard about Jesus and she believed! She had so much faith in Jesus’ power to heal! Her example of faith mirrors three other individuals to whom Jesus said these same words:

1. a blind beggar named Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43)
2. a woman who was a sinner (Luke 7:36–50)
3. a Samaritan man who was a leper (Luke 27:11–19)

Woman with Two Small Copper Coins

Read: Mark 12:41–44 (cp. Luke 21:1–4)

“She, out of her poverty, put in all she owned”

I would like to know more about this woman! She did not come to the temple looking for assistance, even though she apparently was in need of assistance since all she had left was two small copper coins. This poor widow went to the temple thinking about those who were in more desperate need of help than she was herself. How did she come to have so much faith in God to take care of her needs? Had she been present when Jesus gave his sermon on the mountain (Matt. 5–7)? Was she in the crowd, listening, when Jesus said, “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ . . . for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:31–33).

Woman Who Anointed Jesus’ Head with Oil

Read: Mark 14:3–9; Matt. 26:6–13

“She has done a good deed to Me”

This woman remains unnamed but her deeds have been preserved in the Holy Scriptures. Did this woman know Jesus was about to die? Possibly. Obviously, she wanted to do something for Jesus. She could not stop what was about to happen to Him, but she apparently had the money to buy some “costly perfume” and anoint Jesus’ head. Every Worthy Christian must ask herself, “What “good deed” might I do “to” Jesus today?” (cf. Matt. 25:37–40).

“A woman who was a sinner”

Are we not all sinners in need of the blood of the lamb? (Rom. 3:23; 1 Pet. 1:17–19). Was this woman more sinful than the Pharisee? The Pharisee obviously looked down on this woman with a self-righteous attitude; as if he, himself, had never sinned. At least this woman was honest enough to recognize her sin and courageous enough to approach Jesus.

“She began to wet His feet with her tears”

What had this woman learned about Jesus? Had she witnessed the miracle He performed in Nain when He raised a young man from the dead and “gave him back to his mother” (Luke 7:11–17)? Had she been present when Jesus spoke to the crowds in Luke 7:24–35? When she heard Jesus was dining at the Pharisee’s house, she went there, but she did not go empty-handed. She brought perfume and then she found Jesus reclining at the table. She did not interrupt the eating and the conversation taking place at the table. She approached Jesus from behind and then, overcome with emotion, she began to wet Jesus’ feet with her tears! We should all be so humble when we approach God in prayer, and as broken hearted when confessing our sins.

Historical Note: Mark 14:3–9

Oil was used in both Old and New Testament times for medicinal purposes such as healing, softening and soothing wounds (Luke 10:34), for ceremonial purposes such as appointing priests (Ex. 29:7), as well as for preparing a body for burial (Matt. 26:12).