

ST. MARY MAGDALENE

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of the downloadable “622 service” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader's notes
- A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Clock or stop-watch for timing
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

ICE BREAKER: PICTURES OF FUTILITY

Write out some “need-related” phrases or idioms on pieces of paper and fold. Keep in mind that the teens will be asked to draw them, so you will want to stick to concrete concepts. A few examples are below:

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|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Treading water | • Herding cats | • Racing a cheetah |
| • Hung out to dry | • Pushing a boulder up a hill | • Barking up the wrong tree |
| • In over your head | • Flogging a dead horse | • Spiraling out of control |
| • Barely scratching the surface | • Grasping at straws | • Left to twist in the wind |
| • Beating your head against a wall | • Spinning your wheels | • Uphill battle |

The teens take turns selecting a piece of paper from the pile and then drawing a picture illustrating the phrase written on it for the others to guess at. They may draw blank lines depicting the actual words of the phrase and fill in parts of it if they are guessed. All other clues should be drawn (not acted out and word bubbles cannot contain actual characters). The teens have one minute to draw/guess each phrase. Depending on how quick your teens are to guess, you may want to be more or less strict about the exact words, allowing more or less than one minute.

FOR SMALL GROUPS, SIMPLY GIVE THE TEENS AS MANY TURNS AS TIME ALLOWS AND DON'T KEEP SCORE. FOR LARGER GROUPS, DIVIDE INTO TEAMS WHERE TEAM-MATES TRY TO GUESS THE MOST PHRASES BEFORE THE ALLOTTED MINUTE IS UP.

622: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the first part of the order for service for young people in the booklet, up to the middle of page 4.

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK'S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

DISCUSSION: WE ALL NEED SAVING

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- Why do you think we have so many ways of talking about being in a hopeless situation?
(If you skipped the ice breaker, take a moment to read out some of the phrases before posing this question).
- Read out the following quote, and then invite comments on it:
“There are only two kinds of people: saints, who know they are sinners; and sinners, who think they are saints”. – Peter Kreeft
What do you think Kreeft means? (In your own words).

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A few things worth pointing out (if they don't otherwise arise during the discussion):

- *Many popular philosophical systems today suggest that human beings can and will overcome everything and anything. Scripture teaches that this is not true. The very reason Jesus came to save us was because we could not save ourselves. The fact that human beings have come up with so many different ways to talk about what it's like to be unable to overcome something demonstrates that this is a very common experience.*
- *Scripture tells us that "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). We can either confront that reality, turn to God, and be transformed by him, or we can cling to the lie that we are good enough on our own or that we can somehow save ourselves. We're all sinners. What makes a saint a saint, is the knowledge of sin, repentance, God's forgiveness of that sin, and seeking to live in "newness of life".*

THE LESSON: JOHN 20

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

The Gospels identify St. Mary Magdalene as a disciple of Jesus "from whom he had cast out seven demons" (Mark 16:9). She also had the privilege of encountering the risen Lord and being sent to share the good news of his resurrection with the other disciples.

The early Church also connected St. Mary Magdalene with an unnamed (or differently identified) woman in the Gospels who anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. Those who witnessed this particular event were quick to judge the woman and try to send her away, but Jesus told them a parable to help them understand that this was a woman who'd had many sins forgiven, and so she responded with great love. Whereas, the person "who is forgiven little, loves little" (Luke 7:47).

Whether or not it actually was St. Mary Magdalene who washed Jesus' feet, we know that she was one who had "loved much". Together with some of the other women disciples, she followed in grief while her Lord was crucified and afterwards sought to anoint his body for burial... only to find no body in the tomb!

Refer to John 20:1, 11-18.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READING FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGE FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ IT IN ITS ENTIRETY: JOHN 20:1-18.)

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS' NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they've just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What does this passage tell us about St. Mary Magdalene?
- What does this passage tell us about Jesus?
- Take another look at verse 17. What stands out to you?

A few notes and reflections for reference:

- *St. Mary Magdalene loved Jesus. She was overcome with grief at his death. She was at the tomb to do what she could to anoint his remains. But she arrived to find that another dreadful thing had happened: she could not even anoint the remains because Jesus' body was no longer there. She was weeping so unceasingly that both the angels and Jesus first addressed her with the words, "Woman, why are you weeping?" Notice that even the appearance of the angels has not consoled her nor distracted her from her grief. She is very focused on just one thing: finding Jesus' body so that she can give expression to her love and grief in the only way available to her. But when she hears Jesus' voice speaking her name she recognizes it immediately (see John 10:27), and she does the most natural*

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thing in the world – she takes hold of him and never wants to let him go. But St. Mary Magdalene is given a job to do: she must share what she has seen and heard with the other disciples, and having come in grief, she is sent on her way in joy to share the good news.

- Jesus saw St. Mary Magdalene and understood her completely. He saw that her weeping continued unabated though the angels had appeared and spoken to her. He saw that she did not even have the eyes to see who it was that addressed her now. (It is possible that Jesus was waiting to reveal himself to her, as he did with the disciples on their way to Emmaus, but it may also be that St. Mary Magdalene was such a mess of tears and sobbing and looking down that it was not possible for her to recognize him). Jesus speaks her name. His manner of addressing her is tender and caring, but he is also firm with her, because there is more that he has to do, and there is also a job that he has for her.
- Jesus spoke both before and after his death and resurrection about the fact that he would not be staying with his disciples on earth, but would be returning to the Father, “to prepare a place” for them (John 14:2ff), and would send the Holy Spirit to them to empower them for their mission. This was an important part of his work, and it could not be accomplished while his disciples clung to him bodily! But note the change in how he speaks of his relationship to his disciples and God: Jesus has drawn us into fellowship with God! He refers to the disciples as “my brothers” and he refers to God as “my Father and your Father... my God and your God”.

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON'T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU'LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON'T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON'T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer))

Carve out a bit of extra time this week to reflect on your need for God. Are there ways in which you've come to believe that you can do it all on your own? Are there some parts of your life that you've designated as “off limits” to him? Take some time to acknowledge and repent of these things, remembering all that Jesus did in order to save you from your sin. Each one of us has been forgiven much: let us also “love him much”!

The following hymn was written by a young 19th century poet, William Featherston, when he was somewhere between the ages of 12 and 16. Finish your time of reflection by slowly praying through the hymn (either by reading or singing):

*My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;
 For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.
 My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art Thou;
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.*

*I love Thee because Thou has first loved me,
 And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree.
 I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow;
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.*

*I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death,
 And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;
 And say when the death dew lies cold on my brow,
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.*

*In mansions of glory and endless delight,
 I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright;
 I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow;
 If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.*

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- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through the following collect.

O Almighty God, whose blessed Son did sanctify Mary Magdalene, and call her to be a witness to his resurrection: Mercifully grant that by thy grace we may be healed of all our infirmities, and always serve thee in the power of his endless life; who with thee and the Holy Spirit liveth and reigneth, one God, world without end. Amen. (COLLECT FOR THE FEAST OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE, PAGE 286)

CLOSING PRAYERS (622 AGAIN)

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE “PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS” SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU’RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the “Grace”, the final prayer in the booklet.

JOHN 20: FROM GRIEF TO JOY

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...

¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. ¹²And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. 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 round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” ¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher). 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.