

The Gift of Singleness

Part 2

Introduction

In the first part of our study on singles, we looked at the ministry of John the Baptist; Mary, the mother of Jesus; Jesus; and Paul. In this part of the study, we will consider Mary Magdalene, the woman of Samaria, and Mary and Martha of Bethany. We shall also consider some of the discrimination among singles.

Our Study

Mary Magdalene

The Scripture: Luke 8:1-3

"Jesus traveled about...proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means."

1. Describe Mary Magdalene. _____

The Scripture: Mark 16:1-2

"When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome brought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb."

2. What were the women doing? _____

While they were waiting there was a violent earthquake and an angel rolled back the stone sealing the tomb's entrance and sat on it. The angel told them not to be afraid, that Jesus had risen. He told them Jesus was in Galilee and they should go tell the disciples.

The Scripture: Mark 16:9-11

"When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene....She went and told those who had been with Him....When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen Him, they did not believe it."

3. Who are the first to see Jesus after he had risen? _____

4. What was the disciples' reaction when Mary told them that Jesus had risen? _____

Upon seeing the empty tomb and the risen Lord, Mary told the good news to the disciples. Sharing the good news is the work of an evangelist. Mary Magdalene can be considered the first evangelist.

The Woman of Samaria

Another evangelist we know only as the woman of Samaria. The Bible gives her account in the book of John. Jesus broke tradition by speaking with her, as Jewish men did not publicly speak to women, particularly heathen women. After hearing Jesus, this woman was so impressed she returned to her village to tell everyone.

The Scripture: John 4:28-30

"The woman went back to the town and said to the people, 'Come see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be our Christ?' They came out of the town and made their way toward Him."

5. What was the response of the townspeople when they heard the woman's story? _____

The Scripture: John 4:39-42

"Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony....So when the Samaritans came to Him, they urged Him to stay with them, and He stayed two days. And because of His words many more became believers."

6. What did they do next? _____

7. What was the result of His visit? _____

Yes, Jesus so impressed this woman that she not only became His first convert in that area, but she shared what had happened to those she knew, and they too believed.

Mary and Martha of Bethany

The Bible tells us that whenever Jesus traveled to Bethany, He stayed at the home of His friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Shortly before Jesus' death, the friends gave a dinner. At the dinner, Mary did an amazing thing.

The Scripture: John 12:3-5

"Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with fragrance of the perfume."

8. What did Mary do? _____

The Scripture: John 12:4-8

"But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot..., objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a day's wages'...'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that

she should save this perfume for the day of My burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me."

9. What did Judas Iscariot say? _____

10. What was Jesus' response? _____

This perfume was probably the most precious possession Mary owned. Traditionally, Jewish girls saved this vessel of perfume for their wedding day.

The Scripture: Mark 14:9

"I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

11. What was Jesus' prophecy? _____

Discrimination by Singles

As an observer of singles in their day-to-day relationships, I've noticed something very discouraging. Many singles not only consider themselves as second-class citizens, but they treat other singles as second-class citizens as well.

These are a few things I've noticed:

- Singles refusing the social invitations of other singles, while they enthusiastically accept invitations from couples.
- Singles refusing to attend singles' functions because "I get bored when I'm with other singles."
- Singles breaking "dates" with their single friends because "something better" comes along.
- Singles not including other singles when they entertain.

The Bible teaches that we reap what we sow. If we discriminate against other singles--seeing them only as "singles," not individuals, then we can expect the law of retribution to work against us.

Why do we act in such a discriminating manner? Primarily because we truly believe that singles are second-class citizens, ourselves included. What can we do about this attitude? What can we do about our belief that God has given us second best, causing us to indulge in self-pity, even bitterness?

One thing we can do is check our Bibles carefully and see if God is capable of treating approximately one-half of His children unjustly.

The Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:3, 4 in the New American Standard Bible

"Ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect, for all His ways are just; a God of faithfulness and without prejudice, righteous and upright is He."

12. List some of the adjectives used to describe God and His ways: _____

13. What is one quality He lacks? _____

When we think God has treated us unfairly by not sending us the perfect mate, we are accusing Him of injustice. We are disagreeing with the scripture that says His ways are just.

If God has not treated us unfairly, then He has treated us fairly, and it is our thinking that is faulty.

However, we can change our thinking to conform with God's. We can learn to see that God has given us one of His most precious gift--our singleness.

Let us go back to the scripture in First Corinthians.

The Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7:34

"An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs; her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit....I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord."

14. What is an unmarried woman concerned with? _____

15. What is her aim? _____

It is not our purpose here to say that either singleness or the married state is preferable. God looks with favor upon both states and has important work for both to do. It is He who chooses whether we should be married or single. Let us rejoice in the gift He has given us.

The Answers

1. She had been cured of seven demons and she was one of the women who traveled with the disciples and helped support them
2. They were on their way to Jesus' tomb to anoint His body.
3. Mary Magdalene
4. They didn't believe her.
5. They went to see Jesus.
6. They invited Jesus to stay with them.
7. Many more became believers
8. She poured a jar of expensive perfume over Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair.
9. *"Why wasn't the perfume sold and the money given to the poor?"*
10. *"Leave her alone. It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of My burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me."*
11. That Mary's act would be told wherever the gospel is preached
12. Great; His work is perfect; His ways are just; He is faithful, righteous, and upright.
13. Injustice
14. The Lord's affairs
15. To be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit

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