CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
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Scripture Story: John 20:1-18.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages* (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 82.

first witness



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"Christ's first work on earth after His resurrection was to convince His disciples of His undiminished love and tender regard for them. To give them proof that He was their living Saviour, that He had broken the fetters of the tomb, and could no longer be held by the enemy death; to reveal that He had the same heart of love as when He was with them as their beloved Teacher, He appeared to them again and again. He would draw the bonds of love still closer around them. Go tell My brethren, He said, that they meet Me in Galilee" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 793).

keytext

"Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

(John 20:17, NIV)

what do you think?

Most of the time when people assemble lists of great Bible figures, few women are mentioned. Yet women have played a variety of unique and important roles in God's unfolding plan of salvation.

Here are five great Bible heroines. Match each name with the clue that best matches each of them.

____ Deborah
____ Ruth
____ Abigail
____ Esther
____ Mary

a. She bravely went before a king to save her people.
b. A prophet and judge of Israel (Judges 4).
c. A faithful foreigner who served her mother-in-law.
d. Her common sense and quick thinking saved her family's life (1 Samuel 25).
e. She was chosen to bear the Son of God (Luke 1).

did you know?

Did you know that Mary Magdalene got her name from the town of Magdala where she lived? Magdala was a small fishing town located on the Sea of Galilee. The Scriptures record that Jesus visited Magdala once during His earthly ministry (Matthew 15:39). It was during this visit that Jesus delivered Mary of Magdala from demon possession. She never forgot how Jesus set her free and her devotion to Christ continued after His death.

INTO THE STORY

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!'

"So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter came along behind him and went straight into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head. The cloth was still lying in its place, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Then the disciples went back to where they were staying. "Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

"They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?'

"'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

"He asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?'

"Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.'

"Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'

"She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means 'Teacher').

"Jesus said, 'Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."'

"Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!' And she told them that he had said these things to her."

(John 20:1-18, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Go through this week's Scripture story and put an *X* by parts of the story that are new to you. Look for something you had not caught or realized before.

The writer of this narrative is John. Did you notice how John referred to himself during this episode? Did you catch the fact that he made sure everyone knew that he "outran" Peter in getting to Jesus' tomb. Why did he note this fact?

_____
_____
_____

What is the attitude of the women who came to Jesus' tomb? How was this an act of heroism, given the fact that a rabid mob had just crucified their Lord two days earlier?

_____
_____
_____

Why did Mary Magdalene remain at the tomb weeping? What kind of relationship do you think she had with Jesus?

_____
_____
_____

What do you think caused Mary not to recognize Jesus? How can that happen to us today?

_____
_____
_____

What two lessons can you take away from this biblical episode?

_____
_____
_____
_____

punch lines

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love" **(John 15:9, NIV).**

"Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother' " **(Matthew 12:49, 50, NIV).**

"For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning" **(Psalm 30:5, NIV).**

"Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" **(Deuteronomy 6:5, NIV).**

"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him" **(1 John 3:1, NIV).**

further insight

"Only He who is one with God could say, I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again. In His divinity, Christ possessed the power to break the bonds of death."

—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 785

Sabbath

Read Matthew 12:49, 50, and Luke 24:1-12.

How did you do matching up the biblical names of heroines in the *What Do You Think?* section with the clues describing their contributions in Scripture? For the record, the answers are: (a) Esther; (b) Deborah; (c) Ruth; (d) Abigail; (e) Mary.

According to Luke, who were the first people to arrive at Jesus' tomb on the day of the resurrection?

_____

_____

Peter and John came to the tomb. But where were all the *others* who had vowed never to leave Jesus' side?

Sunday

Read John 20:1-17.

After reading the *Into the Story* section, explore the passage by answering the *Out of the Story* questions. Jesus had many more followers than the 12 disciples we have all come to know. Some of His most devoted disciples were women, some of whom came to His tomb to care for His body.

Imagine that you were one of the women who saw Jesus' empty tomb. What words would you use to describe the experience? Read John 20:1-17 once again and then share five words that would have best captured the moment for you. _____, _____, _____, _____, _____.

Monday

Read John 20:17.

This week's *Key Text* is one of the most powerful texts in the Bible.

Who is Jesus talking to in this scripture?

_____

What is the main message that Jesus is communicating?

_____

_____

The first human to see the resurrected Christ was a once demon-possessed woman. Not only that, but Jesus told her His future plans and then trusted her to deliver this news to His disciples. God gave to Mary Magdalene a privilege that no other human—male or female—could claim.

What's the message here?

_____

_____

Tuesday

Read John 15:9.

This week's *Flashlight* has a sense of urgency to it.

What did Jesus say to His disciples in John 16:22?

_____

_____

How about Matthew 20:17-19?

_____

_____

Jesus did everything He could to prepare His disciples for His death, by pointing them to the Resurrection. This was the hope that He was eager to communicate to Mary Magdalene, His disciples, and all of us today. Because Jesus conquered death, we need not fear it. We have hope!

Wednesday

Read 1 John 3:1.

Have you noticed the not-so-hidden theme in this week's *Punch Lines*? The theme can be summed up in one word—love.

While reading this week's Scripture story, did you notice anything peculiar? Where were Jesus' family members?

What does John 19:25-27 tell us about how Jesus viewed His family?

_____

_____

Jesus said in Matthew 12:49, 50 that those who do the will of His Father were His true family. The people who wept bitterly over the death of Jesus, and made their way to His tomb at the first opportunity, were those who had surrendered their lives to His Father's will. They were His family.

Thursday

Read Psalm 30:5.

A teen guy posted the following message online:

"Dear God, life seems so rough right now, and I'm all but ready to give up on everything, including life. This period of pain has been going on for over a year, and it is affecting both me and my family. I pray that happiness can find me again, that the sun will come out, and that I can once again find reasons to love life. I don't want to live like this anymore. Please help me."

Based on what you learned this week, what would you say to encourage this guy?

Friday

Read Deuteronomy 6:5.

One day Jesus will break through the heavens and return to earth to save all who have confessed and accepted Him as their Lord and Savior. That is the blessed hope that keeps God's earthly family going. What are you doing to prepare for Jesus' soon return?

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages or (*Humble Hero*), chapter 82.

*A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages*, entitled *Humble Hero*, has been created just for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press® Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.