

–Chapter 9–
Unlikely Witness
Jesus and Mary Magdalene

The Big Picture

Mary and a company of friends are startled to find an empty tomb. Soon after, Mary is the first to see the resurrected Jesus. It's an unexpected choice, in view of the laws that declare women to be invalid witnesses in court. God's choice of Mary has interesting implications for everyone who believes. He uses the unexpected to reveal His glory.

Discuss

"Mary thought she would never see or speak to Jesus again. Imagine the joy that welled up from her heart when she realized he was back. Any decorum she might have observed in the past, any limitations of expression necessitated by acceptable social practices, would have been flung to the side as she rushed to embrace the one she loved with all her heart."

From agony to ecstasy: can you imagine how Mary felt the moment she understood it was Jesus who stood before her, living and breathing once more? We worship a Savior that is alive to this day. Did you allow social acceptability to dampen your expressions of joy in his presence?

"Don't think for a moment it was by accident that Mary was first to see the Lord. Nothing about the crucifixion or resurrection happened by chance. Each event was carefully orchestrated by a sovereign God, fulfilling the prophecies given long ago."

Why do you think Mary was given the honor of being the first to witness the resurrection? Does God's choice have any implications for how he thinks of you?

"Jesus came to conquer sin and its consequences and accomplished this when he rose from the dead. No longer would a woman be treated as a less valuable entity than a man. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus,' Paul assured his readers. In the kingdom of God, women have been redeemed from the consequences of sin, brought back to their original standing before the fall. In Christ they have been set free.

Do you think the church has fully embraced this truth? In what ways do you see room for improvement? With an eye toward the command "do all in love," what is our appropriate response?

"Our effectiveness has never been about us at all. We are mere messengers. The power is in the message. God's Word is powerful and effective. It changes lives."

Do you believe this? Why then do we often hesitate when the Holy Spirit prompts us to speak His Word? What are the possible underlying reasons for a fearful response? Are they valid in light of this truth?

Moving Forward

1. God's Word is powerful. How do these verses describe its potential?

Isaiah 55:10-11

1 Thessalonians 2:13

Hebrews 4:12

1 Peter 1:23

How does understanding its power relieve you of fear in delivering its message?

2. Besides speaking his Word, what are other ways God reveals himself through us to the world?

Matthew 5:14-16

Ephesians 3:8-10

Philippians 2:14-16

1 Peter 2:12

3. God very frequently uses the unexpected to bring glory to his name. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, 2 Corinthians 4:7, 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, and Philippians 4:10-13. What do these verses tell you about God's unorthodox methods? How does this affect your understanding of how He wants to use you?

4. During the course of this nine week study, what have you learned about Jesus that has moved you forward in your relationship with him?