

Mother's Day May, 2006

I have a top 10 list of things that my mother taught me.

10. My mother taught me about the science of Osmosis.

Shut your mouth and eat your supper.

9. My mother taught me foresight.

Make sure that you wear clean underwear in case you are in an accident.

8. My mother taught me logic.

Because I said so, that's why.

7. My mother taught me religion.

You better pray that comes out of the carpet.

6. My mother taught me to appreciate a job well done.

If you are going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning.

5. My mother taught me about the weather.

This room looks like a tornado hit it.

4. My mother taught me about contortionism.

Will you look at that dirt on the back of your neck?

3. My mother taught me humor.

When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don't come running to me.

2. My mother taught me behavior modification.

Stop acting like your father.

1. My mother taught me about justice.

One day you'll have kids, and I hope that they turn out just like you.

Erma Bombeck writes;

For the first 4 or 5 years after I had children, I considered motherhood a temporary condition -- not a calling. It was a time of my life set aside for exhaustion and long hours. It would pass. Then one afternoon, with 3 kids in tow, I came out of a supermarket pushing a cart (with four wheels that went in opposite directions) when my toddler son got away from me. Just outside the door, he ran toward a machine holding bubble gum in a glass dome. In a voice that shattered glass he shouted, "Gimme! Gimme!" I told him I would give him what for if he didn't stop shouting and get in the car.

As I physically tried to pry his body from around the bubble gum machine, he pulled the entire thing over. Glass and balls of bubble gum went all over the parking lot. We had now attracted a sizable crowd.

I told him he would never see a cartoon as long as he lived, and if he didn't control his temper, he was going to be making license plates for the state.

He tried to stifle his sobs as he looked around at the staring crowd. Then he did something that I was to remember for the rest of my life. In his helpless quest for comfort, he turned to the only one he trusted his emotions with -- me. He threw his arms around my knees and held on for dear life.

I had humiliated him, chastised him, and berated him, but I was still all he had. That single incident defined my role. I was a major force in this child's life.

Sometimes we forget how important stability is to a child. I've always told mine, "The easiest part of being a mother is giving birth.... the hardest part is showing up for it each day..."

Mother's day is traditionally the day when children give something back to their mothers for all the spit they produce to wash dirty faces, all the old gum they held in their hands, all the noses they wipe, and all the bloody knees they "made well" with a kiss.

This is the day mothers are rewarded for washing all those sheets in the middle of the night, driving kids to school when they missed the bus, and enduring all the football games in the rain.

It's appreciation day for making your children finish something they said they couldn't do, not believing them when they said, "I hate you," and sharing their good times and their bad times.

Their cards probably won't reflect it, but what they are trying to say is, "Thank you for showing up."

Did you know?

By the time a child reaches 18, a mother has had to handle some extra 18,000 hours of child-generated work.

In fact, women who never have children enjoy the equivalent of an extra three months a year.

A Junior High science teacher lectured on the properties of magnets for an entire class.

The next day he gave his students a quiz.

The first question read like this: "My name begins with an "M," has six letters, and I pick things up. What am I?"

Half the kids in the class wrote, "Mother."

Mothers are teachers.

Mothers are disciplinarians.

Mothers are cleaning ladies.

Some mothers are gardeners & mowers of lawns.

And most mothers understand that baking cookies is more important than washing windows.

Mothers are nurses & doctors & psychologists & counselors & chauffeurs & coaches.

Mothers are developers of personalities, molders of vocabularies, & shapers of attitudes.

Mothers are soft voices saying, "I love you."

And mothers are a link to God, a child's first impression of God's love.

Today is Mother's Day and we want to celebrate Mothers

And you know what men – I think we need to appreciate women altogether.

I am for one very appreciative to God for the creation of Eve.

Today we are on our second sermon in the series of:

Seeking the Truth of the Da Vinci Code

- Last week we touched on the Da Vinci Code and the Divinity of Christ.
- I've heard that quite a few of our Small Groups took on the challenge to study this. I want to thank you for your doing this.
- And we challenged you on how to react to this book and the film coming out on May 19th.
- We said, "The church can react in a negative way or accept the challenge to use this as an

evangelistic tool to reach out and talk to people about Jesus."

It just comes naturally for us today on this Mother's Day to address Dan Brown's statement of "**The church devaluing women in the Bible.**"

For you who were not here last Sunday morning, let me catch you up to where we went last Sunday morning.

Over the past year and half one of the major best selling books has been a book called the Da Vinci Code. **Over 40 million copies sold and a film coming out on May 19th.**

This book has already had a very negative influence on Christianity and the Church.

The book professes to be genuine history of a secret which the Christian church has tried to suppress for nearly 2000 years –

- **Namely that Jesus did not die on the cross – Nor did He raise from the dead.**
- **But instead He was spirited away by his disciples.**
- **He did in fact marry Mary Magdalene**
- **Mary Magdalene and Jesus had a child together.**

The Da Vinci Code's Claim: "Mary Magdalene's most important role was being married to Jesus."

- In my sermon today, I want to address the Bible's teaching on women in the life and teachings of Jesus.

- I also want to spend some time addressing what the Bible and history says about Mary Magdalene and her relationship to Jesus.
- **So I have a big order today.**

But first, let me note again that there is **no evidence in the Bible or in Church History** for the claim that Mary Magdalene and Jesus were married.

Again for those in Small Groups, there is material in the foyer for you to take and study together.

Dan Brown claims backing from the Gospel of Phillip for his historical backing for Jesus being married.

The problems:

- First of all, the **Gospel of Phillip is a Gnostic text** that is widely considered by scholars to have been written at least a century after the canonical gospels.

- So it's not authoritative.

Let me give you a quick lesson on Gnosticism:

The Gnostics was a religious sect whose doctrines were mixed with Christianity and Greek philosophy.

They did not agree with the 4 Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and did their best to discredit them.

As a matter of fact, these writers included in their writing, doctrines that were at odds with the teachings of Jesus and the apostles and **were not** included in the Council of Nicea.

The Council of Nicea was where the Canon was established and we get our 66 books of the Bible.

You see – the serious student will know and understand **The NT Gospels were honored by the church as the authoritative accounts of Jesus long before the so-called Gnostic gospels were written.**

The Da Vinci Code claims that the New Testament Gospels should not be viewed as either the earliest or most reliable of the early Christian writings.

Among these gospels were the Gnostic writings, which supposedly revealed the true human Jesus, an enlightened feminist who encouraged worship of the **“sacred feminine”** and appointed Mary Magdalene to be his successor.

The problem with the book is that it is promoted as the truth and due to the serious lack of Biblical knowledge, (that is Biblical illiteracy) even among professing Christians within the church, it's very challenging and difficult for some to distinguish between the truth and the lies put forth by Dan Brown.

Folks, I am sorry to have to say this, but we live in a Biblical Illiterate society even within the Church!

The book claims to have secret knowledge of God, of Jesus and of the history of the Christian faith.

The Da Vinci Code says,

1. A great struggle took place, according to this view, when hateful male-dominated religions – especially Christianity – sought to destroy this pure Nature worship and to replace it with an oppressive religion where only male gods reigned supreme.

2. Sexual union came to be viewed as the Original sin in the Garden of Eden, and Eve was vilified (Eve

became the villain) as the cause of humanity's fall. As part of its campaign to suppress the sacred feminine, the church supposedly rounded up and burned all free-thinking and scholarly women as witches – a total of five million in all!

However, there is no historical truth in this at. The fact is that only about 40,000 women were burned at the stake and the greatest majority of them were burned as witches outside of the influence of the church.

Now - John in his Epistle and the letter to the Galatians sought to refute such 'secret knowledge' teaching – known as Gnosticism.

Galatians 1:6-9

6 “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!”

Scripture Reading: Mark 16:9

9 When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.

Isn't it interesting to us that of all the people whom Jesus could have appeared to first, He chose to reveal Himself to the women who followed Him.

- Jesus' regard for women was much different from of His contemporaries.
- Jesus treated women with high regard and respect.

Let me share with you three ways He did this:

1. Jesus demonstrated the High Value He Placed on Women by recognizing their value as Persons.

Now – men, let me talk to you this morning.

When you think of the women in your life, you probably think of them in terms of the roles they play.

She is your wife.
 She is your mother.
 She is your daughter.
 She is your daughter-in-law.

And I want to go on record to let you know that each one of these women in my life are very, very important.

Jesus valued the women in His life by making them equal with men before His Father God.

Jesus quoted Genesis 1:27 when He said in Matthew 19:4 that God made them male and female, and **that woman was created in the image of God just as men are.**

In spite of what Dan Brown says in his book, **Jesus treated women as equal.**

- He regularly addressed them in public.
- Men didn't do this in Jesus' day.
- Remember how the men were amazed at the treatment of the Samaritan woman at the well.
- Jesus was in the public and he was speaking to a woman, not even a Jew.
- He spoke freely with the woman caught in adultery, with the woman with the bleeding disorder. He even called her "daughter."
- He showed the value of women in His treatment of divorce and lust.

- Remember Jesus said a woman is not just a sex object, someone to use and then discard.
- Jesus even said to think lustfully about a woman was to commit adultery with her.
- Jesus taught that women had rights as individuals and that they were to be respected.

Just think of how often in scripture it is the woman who is the vehicle for ministry.

Let me ask you some questions:

Who prompted Jesus to perform His first miracle? A Woman!

Who ministered to Christ during His public ministry? The women!

Who anointed the body of Jesus? The women!

Who stayed with Jesus throughout his trial and crucifixion? The women!

Who were the first witnesses to the resurrected Savior? The women!

Who makes up the majority of the population of most churches today? The women!

2. Jesus also demonstrated the High Value He Placed on Women by According them Dignity in His Ministry.

3. Jesus did this by using women frequently in His illustrations.

Remember Jesus lived in a day that was dominated by men.

Over and over in the Gospels, it tells us of women who were active in the life of the Church.

They traveled with Jesus from place to place.

They were present and mentioned in the Gospels at the wedding of Cana, when He went to Capernaum, when He was on the cross, and everywhere in between.

Jesus never treated a woman like a second-class citizen.

And men - we should love and respect our wife and never treat her anything but in the highest regard.

Now let's turn to the longest passage in the Bible about Mary Magdalene - **John 20:11-18.**

This is where Mary Magdalene plays her most important role.

In **Luke 8** we learn that Mary Magdalene had been set free from seven demons.

Notice with me in verses 1-2 that Luke is the first gospel writer to give an account of how Mary Magdalene came to Christ.

She came Demon possessed.

1 “After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, 2 and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; 3Joanna 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.”

The Bible doesn't tell us what the evil spirits were doing to Mary, but we do know that Luke writes that Jesus delivered her from them.

We can safely declare that Christ freed her from being possessed by 7 demons and from their presence in her life.

From that moment on she becomes a devoted follower of Jesus.

Now, I want you to think about that - If it had been you or me delivered from 7 demons, we would have followed Jesus to the cross too and beyond the cross. Wouldn't we?

Wouldn't you have been completely devoted and committed to Him for the rest of your life?

I. The Bible's Claim: John 20:16

Mary Magdalene's most important role was being the first to see the Resurrected Jesus.” - v. 16.

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).”

A. Mary Magdalene here receives the immeasurable honor of being the first person to see the Resurrected Jesus.

Think about this - What an incredible moment that must have been.

- Incidentally, for those who might argue in defense of Dan Brown, “Well, of course Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene first - she was His wife!”,

There are three things worth noting here.

- 1) It seems amazingly peculiar, if Mary Magdalene was in fact married to Jesus, that she would greet Him as “Teacher!”**
- 2) Remember that Brown claims that the whole idea that Jesus was God was created in 325 A.D. by the Council of Nicea.**

And Dan Brown didn't believe in the Resurrection of Jesus. He doesn't believe that Jesus ever was raised from the dead.

Besides Brown says, "After all, **He wasn't God** - that was invented later by those who wanted people to believe this."

So therefore this whole scene - to Brown's way of thinking - is manufactured simply because it includes a Resurrected Jesus.

3) Third, Brown claims that the disciples got into a huge power struggle with Mary Magdalene after Jesus' death over who would control the legacy of His name and teachings.

Brown claims that the disciples forced Mary Magdalene to flee to France with the child that she had conceived from Jesus, whom they called Sarah.

So if that were case and the disciples were so adamantly against Mary Magdalene (and further, they were inventing these resurrection stories), why in the world would they have made Mary Magdalene the first person Jesus appears to in their fictional account?

It just wouldn't make any sense at all!

Why would you put the person you despise the most and want to discredit the most in a position of such great honor?

You wouldn't do that! Do you see that with me?

- No, here we see that Mary Magdalene's greatest role **is not as the wife of Jesus** but as **the first person to see the risen Lord.**

Look again with me to John 20.

Let's set the context.

It is the third day after the crucifixion.

We know from the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion that Mary Magdalene was present throughout this terrible ordeal, at the foot of the cross.

She witnessed the death of Christ.

She had been involved in the anointing of His body for burial.

Now John tells us (verse 1) she goes early in the morning of the first day of the week to anoint His body again.

19

“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.”

It's worth noting she begins her journey under the cover of darkness – coming to Jesus, and now (unbeknown to her) **Jesus had risen from the dead.**

I find it interesting in verse 2 that she goes for Peter.

2 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!"

He had denied Jesus three times and yet his standing is such among those who followed Jesus that it is to him Mary Magdalene goes to report the stone being rolled away from the entrance.

John goes on to recount in the next 7 verses how Peter and John ran to the tomb and find it empty.

Peter and John leave – and - Now look at what Mary does – John tells us (v11), **she remains at the tomb weeping.**

20

Her grief and pain at the loss of her Lord is compounded now by the loss of His body.

In verse 13 we read that they (angels) ask her a simple question: ***“Woman, why are you crying?”***

Verse 13 we read her reply. Through tear stained cheeks and tear strained voice she utters her grief. ***“They have taken my Lord.”***

So what lessons can you and I learn this morning from Mary Magdalene that will help us in our Christian walk today?

I think we should learn from **her devotion to Christ which was driven by her knowledge of what He had freed her from.**

She knew the reality of life under the powers of demonism and darkness and the glorious freedom which is found in Christ alone.

That led her to give of her time and her money to serve Christ.

Her gratitude and love for Christ was driven by her perception of her need.

She appreciated her freedom because she knew exactly what bondage to demons was like.

Maybe the reason so many Christians live such poor spiritual lives is because they have never realized the depths from which they have been saved.

First - The one lesson we all need to learn from Mary is **gratitude to Christ for releasing us from sin and eternal death.**

That is why so many have such a superficial spiritual life because they have forgotten the depths from which they have been saved from through Christ.

Secondly, I think we need to learn that when grief and pain in the Christian life comes, as it will, then be honest about it.

Mary Magdalene cried at the tomb – she was overwhelmed by the thought that His body had been stolen.

She did not put on any false face.

She did not utter meaningless words ‘it will all work for the good.’

Standing outside and empty tomb, with arms full of spices and a broken heart, she utters the truest words in the midst of tears **‘we don’t know where they have taken Him.’**

She didn’t know where He was **but He knew exactly where she was.**

She had come to the last place she had left Him – **the tomb.**

She returned to the last place she was in His presence.

She remained there, even when everyone else left and she was rewarded with the resurrected Lord calling her by name – **“Mary.”**

Friends, there are some of you in here this morning and you are just like Mary Magdalene – your heart is broken and you can identify with those words **‘we don’t know where He is.’**

Possibly this morning you really don’t know where Jesus is.

This morning you have come here to this church and you are not even sure why you are here – but you know you had to come because something in your heart and soul said this is where you will meet with Him.

This morning I want to assure you from God’s Word – He is here and He is calling your name.

How will you know He is calling your name –

Because in your heart there will be a restlessness.

In your heart and in your head there will be a battle going on –

a battle for your soul and for your eternal destiny.

Your heart is restless because you know everything you have heard this morning, or on previous mornings, applies to you – it is like there is no one else in this church but you and Jesus.

He is calling you by name.

Now the response is up to you.

Mary fell at His feet in humble adoration – and friend - you too must do the same.

Conclusion:

1. More than anything else this morning, every woman here needs to know that Jesus cares about them.
2. Whatever you find yourself going through, Jesus loves you.

3. As Mother's there have been times when you felt underappreciated, unthanked, and undervalued.
4. You know what it means to be overlooked and taken for granted.
5. I want you to know this morning that Jesus not only knows you have needs; He also knows what your needs are.
6. And He is the only One who can and will meet your needs.
7. I would like to pray for the women of our church this morning.