

*We Would See Jesus: The Son of God*

## **“Followed Him & Ministered to Him”**

*Deb Miller*

**W**ho can find a virtuous woman (Prov. 31:10)? Why is a virtuous woman so valuable and hard to find? It was in the divine will to create human beings “male and female” (Gen. 1:27). [All Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.] Each has been assigned suitable roles and responsibilities in harmony with God’s intentions for the human race. We were created because we were necessary and needed. Throughout history, we women have acted out the old nursery rhyme about the little girl with the curl right in the middle of her forehead. When we are good, we are very, very good, but when we are bad, we are horrid. The role women played in the unfolding of the divine scheme of redemption is thrilling—including such notables as Ruth and Esther in the Old Testament and the mother of Jesus in the New.

An examination of the women mentioned in the four gospel accounts presents a very short list and an extremely short list of those actually named.

### **WOMEN NAMED**

1. Mary and Martha, sisters of Lazarus, who hosted Him in their home (Luke 10:38); sought Jesus to heal Lazarus (John 11); and prepared a meal where Mary anointed Jesus for His burial (John 12).

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2. Salome, who stood at the cross (Mark 15:40).
3. Mary Magdalene, relieved of demons and provided for Jesus' ministry from her substance (Luke 8:2); stood at the cross (Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40; Luke 23:49; John 19:25); followed Jesus' body to the tomb (Matt. 27:61; Mark 15:47; Luke 23:55); visited the tomb to anoint the body (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 20:1); Jesus appeared first to her after His resurrection (Matt. 28:9; Mark 16:9; John 20:14).
4. Elizabeth, close kinsperson of Mary (Luke 1:39).
5. Anna, prophetess of Asher (Luke 2:36).
6. Joanna, healed of demons, cared for Jesus' ministry from her substance (Luke 8:2); and came to anoint the body of Jesus (Matt. 24:10).
7. Susanna, healed of demons, and cared for Jesus' ministry from her substance (Luke 8:2).
8. Mary, mother of Jesus (Matt. 1:16; Luke 1:27); raised him until He was of age (Luke 2:51); asked of Him His first public miracle (John 2:1); visited Jesus in His ministry (Matt. 12:46; Mark 3:31; Luke 8:19; John 2:12); stood at the cross (John 19:23).

**UNNAMED WOMEN**

1. Peter's mother-in-law (Matt 8:14; Mark 1:29; Luke 4:38).
2. Ruler's daughter who was raised from the dead (Matt. 9:18; Mark 5:22; Luke 8:41).
3. Servant girls who confronted Peter (Matt. 26:69-71; Mark 14:66; Luke 22:56; John 18:17).
4. Woman of Canaan asking for Jesus to remove the demon from her daughter (Matt. 15:22; Mark 7:24).

5. Widow with two mites (Mark 12:41; Luke 21:1).
6. Mother of Zebedee's sons (Matt. 20:20).
7. Mourning widow with dead son that Jesus raised from dead (Luke 7:12).
8. Sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7:37).
9. Woman who spoke out during Jesus' sermon (Luke 11:27)—probably the reason we women are to remain silent in the church (smile).
10. Woman with severe scoliosis (Luke 13:10).
11. Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:5).
12. Woman caught in adultery (John 8:3).
13. Sister of Mary who stood with Mary at the cross (John 19:25).
14. Sisters of Jesus (Matt. 13:5).
15. Woman with a hemorrhage (Matt. 9:20; Mark 5:25; Luke 8:43-44).

Out of all the women who beheld the Son of God in His short time on Earth, only the above were deemed mentionable. It must be noted here that there are only nine women named by their given names, while 15 are unnamed. Of note also is the fact that further study reveals that three of these entries could be the same person. In his book, *The Fourfold Gospel*, one of our brotherhood's most noted scholars and historians, J.W. McGarvey, helps us to understand that three of the above entries (#2 on the named list—Salome, #6 on the unnamed list—mother of Zebedee's sons, and #13 on the unnamed list—the sister of Mary who stood with Mary at the cross) are probably all the same woman. He hypothesizes this based on the passages naming the women who stood at

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the cross. Matthew's observation is: "And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons" (Matt. 27:55-56). Mark broadens the listing: "There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem" (Mark 15:40-41). Wouldn't you like to know who those "many other women" were?

Luke offers a different angle on the same event: "And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things" (Luke 23:48-49). John's remarks take us in a different direction:

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:25-27)

It confused me in early studies that when I put the accounts together there seemed to be a controversy. That is, until I happened on to Brother McGarvey's chart which is actually in his study of the selection of the twelve apostles and possible kindred ties. Note that in John's account you can interpret three or four women based upon

the way it is read. I had in my youth assumed there were three women there because of the accounts of Matthew and Mark which list three. Let me share McGarvey's chart with you and see if his proposal clears this concern up for you as it has for me:

Verse	AT THE CROSS			
Matt. 27:56		Mary Magdalene	And Mary the mother of James and Joses	And the mother of the sons of Zebedee
Mark 15:40		Mary Magdalene	And Mary the mother of James the Less, and of Joses	And Salome
John 19:25	His mother	And Mary Magdalene	Mary the wife of Clopas	The sister of Jesus' mother

(From J.W. McGarvey's *Fourfold Gospel*, p. 225)

From the information gathered from the accounts of the women at the cross, we can now approach several encounters with a different outlook. Take, for instance, the mother of James and John approaching Jesus to request a special placement for her sons. We consider this from the standpoint of an aunt thinking her nephew was to be king. At the foot of the cross, we see Jesus placing the responsibility of His mother, not on just one of the apostles (singling him out with favoritism), but a near kinsperson who would properly have this responsibility. Then we consider her standing at the foot of the cross as an aunt, a sister, and the mother of two of the apostles. She was very

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confused at that moment, I believe. She went from thinking he was to be anointed king to comforting her sister. We, as women, can be glad for Mary, his mother, knowing that she had her sister with her.

What do we know about the women who stood at the cross? What characteristics did these women possess? What made them rearrange their schedules and their lives in order to be in His presence on a frequent basis? We would do well to emulate their attributes.

1. They were **dedicated**. As one reads through the gospel accounts, one cannot help but notice how their names come up continually. They were devoted and consistent in that devotion.
2. They were **committed**. They made sacrifices on the home front in order to follow the Master.
3. They were **courageous**. After all, even the apostles all scattered in fear. But the women held their ground and remained.
4. They were **humble**. They were willing to risk embarrassment and ridicule from other women.
5. They were full of spiritual **valor**. These women were willing to be placed in personal jeopardy. They were perplexed but not fearful.
6. They were **servants**. They prepared meals. They washed His feet. They came to anoint His body at the tomb.
7. They showed an **eager** spirit. They clearly were ready, on a moment's notice, to "gather up their skirts and run."
8. They were **sacrificial**. Three women (Mary Magdalene, Susanna and Joanna) took from their own means to aid Him.

9. They were **thoughtful**. They took into consideration His standing. For example, one woman was careful not to place Him in an unclean state by touching His garment. According to Mosaic Law, He was not allowed to touch her or her clothes (Lev. 15:19-27). She was thoughtful enough to be careful to avoid touching Jesus' person. She carefully touched only the edge of His garment. His turning to look directly at her and verbally "calling her out" allowed the crowd to know that she had not violated the law by transferring her uncleanness to Him.
10. They were **flexible and spontaneous**. In following Jesus into Jerusalem, these women had no idea that, rather than witnessing a coronation, they would see instead a crucifixion.
11. They had their **priorities** straight. Contemplate how they would have had to provide for themselves, though from out of town, after the crucifixion.
12. They were women of **principle**. If something needed to be done, they were ready and willing to do it. If they needed to go, they went.
13. They were **comforting, nurturing, attentive and respectful**.
14. To sum up all these traits, these women demonstrated the fact that they were **unselfish**—the ultimate Christian trait.

I would personally love to have some of these women to dinner, wouldn't you? Our examination of the life of Christ, and particularly His final moments on Earth and the days following His death, reveal that women were

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prominent in His life. Mary Magdalene alone seems to have run everywhere, all at once. I cannot help but wonder at her energy level and secretly hope that she was much younger than myself. I would love to believe that I would have been dedicated enough to be first on the scene everywhere, but then reality sets in. Notice that His mother is not the one coming to the tomb. This gives me comfort as I age.

I love to contemplate the fact that we have every bit as much of a chance to minister to Christ as they did. If I "wash your feet" in service, and every other Christian brother or sister, and every friend and neighbor, and every stranger, then I am anointing the Savior's feet, and I am bringing spices to His tomb, and I am sacrificing for the apostles and for Jesus' ministry.

"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me'" (Matt. 25:40).

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