

Releasing thoughts...

Mary Magdalene was a great example for us as Christian women. She did her work without hope of recognition in this life. She followed Him when the cause seemed lost, yet labored with the other women in the Lord's work. You may feel as if you're struggling and not getting anywhere in your personal life, in your ministry or in your church. Just remember that everything you do as a Christian woman is for the Lord Jesus. Are you listening for His voice? When you hear His voice, through the Scriptures, do you respond in faith? Is your relationship with Him your top priority? Ladies, I know how it is to work for many years and have the highs and lows that go along with a Christian life. But isn't it worth it? Look to the future and to what is in store for those who persevere to the end. Mary Magdalene and the others had their hope in God confirmed in the resurrection of Jesus. That same hope is there for us. Stay devoted to the One who deserves all of our devotion.

FEBRUARY 2014 FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

My Name is Devotion

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Beginning thoughts...

Many consider February the "Love Month." Men and women give Valentines to their sweethearts, spouses and others. It's a time for being in love, falling in love or *wanting to be* in love. It's also greatly overplayed and extremely profitable for merchants. Don't take me wrong. I like to get flowers or candy as much as any woman; although, in 45 years of marriage, that has not happened very often...maybe twice?

Love wears many faces. It can be a romantic, bed and breakfast getaway. It can be a special dinner and movie shared by two. Or it can be filling the gas tank, taking out the garbage, or bringing home a paycheck every week type of love. The main thing is that love requires devotion. My husband shows me love and devotion in many ways.

Mary Magdalene showed Jesus how much she loved Him by being a follower and by supporting His ministry. She was with Him during times of joy and sorrow. She saw Him physically exhausted and spiritually drained from everything He was doing in His work. She was a true friend and totally devoted to Him. She loved Him, not with the type of love I described earlier, but with a deep, abiding, heart-felt, devoted kind of love. Some authors and movie makers try to persuade us that she and Jesus were actually lovers or maybe married. This could not be further from the truth. Jesus never had a wife or a lover. He never sinned. I don't know how He would have had time to be married. Why, He didn't even have an earthly home and certainly not much privacy, since there were always multitudes of people following Him. The books and movies that portray these scenarios are completely false.

When you think of true devotion, think of God's devotion to us. He loves us with an unconditional love, a love that sent His Son to die on the cross for each and every one of us. Mary Magdalene met that Son and became a different person. She expressed her love in following Jesus Christ. We are given opportunity to do the same by accepting Him as Lord and Savior. A thousand years ago or today—it doesn't matter. God's love and salvation never change. I pray our lives will show our deepest devotion to our deliverer, Jesus, so others may accept Him.

My Name is Devotion

FINANCIAL DEVOTION TO GOD

Key Verse: “And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance.” (Luke 8:2-3).

Key Thought: Whatever our calling or life situation, we can financially support the work of the Kingdom.

✎ Write the key verse in your journal.

✎ Go over the questions and answers on p. 37 of *Treasure*.

✎ Of all the topics we could talk about, what one is usually considered very sensitive? (*Money*) Why is that? Do you want anyone, other than your spouse, going through your financial records?

✎ What does the Bible tell us about money? (“*the love of money is the root of all evil*”—1 Timothy 6:10.) Notice it did not say money was the root, but the love of money is the culprit. (*We usually support what we love.*) Do you support your church, missionaries, other ministries and charitable organizations? (Do have to answer aloud.)

✎ Does everyone believe in tithing? What is its purpose? (*For the support of God’s work—Malachi 3:10.*) What does God say if we don’t tithe? (*We’ve robbed Him—Malachi 3:8-9.*) How is God’s work to be supported unless Christians give of their means?

✎ Read Luke 18:18-25 and Matthew 19:22. What happened to the rich young ruler? (*He went away sorrowfully.*) Now read Mark 12:41-44. What happened to the widow? (*Jesus commended her.*)

✎ Are we required to give what we don’t have (Luke 21:4)? How should we give to God? (*Sacrificially*)

✎ What are some examples of sacrificial giving? (*Widow of Zarephath—1 Kings 17:12-15; Mary of Bethany—Matthew 26:7-9; Members of early church—Acts 4:34-35; Churches at Macedonia—2 Corinthians 8:1-4.*)

✎ In return, what does God do? (*He gives us a glorious inheritance—1 Peter 1:4; He furnishes undying hope—Philippians 3:20; He promises us permanent residence—John 14:2; He offers real joy—Luke 10:20; He rewards us with future exaltation—Luke 22:30.*)

✎ Write this name of God in your journal: “One that giveth thee power to get wealth.”

Reflection: Dismiss in prayer asking God to bless your finances and increase your willingness to give where needed.

My Name is Devotion

SPIRITUAL DEVOTION TO GOD

Key Verse: “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene” (John 19:25).

“But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb” (John 20:11).

Key Thought: Spiritual devotion—characterized by a yearning in our hearts to praise, thank and spend time with the Lord—requires putting words into actions.

✎ Go over the activities on p. 37, in *Treasure*.

✎ To whom are you devoted?

✎ If your life were on stage for everyone to see, could they identify the object or direction of your devotion? Would it be your husband, children, job, pets, hobbies or recreation?

✎ Is it wrong to be devoted/dedicated to these things? (*No, but they should not have our complete devotion.*)

✎ Who deserves our total, complete devotion? (*The Lord—Deuteronomy 6:5.*)

✎ What characterizes total devotion? (*Love—1 John 4:16; Deuteronomy 30:2. Obedience—Psalm 119:2; 34. Trust—Proverbs 3:5. Prayer—Jeremiah 29:13, Repentance—Joel 2:12; Acts 3:19.*)

✎ Mary Magdalene displayed these characteristics in her devotion to Jesus. How? (*With her gratitude in ministering—Mark 15:40-41; her presence at the cross—John 19:25; and in being at the sepulchre—Matthew 27:61; 28:1.*)

✎ In return, what did Christ do for her? (*Appeared to Mary Magdalene first after His resurrection—Mark 16:9; Gave her a wonderful revelation—John 20:11-17.*)

✎ Notice her obedience in John 20:17-18, in telling the disciples that Jesus had truly risen from the dead and had to ascend to His Father, but not only His, but hers as well. (*Verse 17 should give us all Glory bumps!*)

✎ Do you want to be more devoted to God today than you were yesterday?

✎ Write the name for Teacher and Master, *Rabboni*, in your journal.

Reflection: Dismiss in prayer by asking God to give you a longing for more of Him, more of His word, and the willingness to accept His teachings.

My Name is Devotion

PHYSICAL DEVOTION TO OTHERS

Key Verse: “The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre” (John 20:1).

Key Thought: Devotion to Christ fuels devotion and care for others.

- 🕯 Go over p. 41 in *Treasure*.
- 🕯 Have you had to be a care giver for anyone? Is it an easy thing to do?
- 🕯 Why do some people care for and provide for others even disregarding their own needs sometimes? (*Devotion and love*)
- 🕯 Have you seen this personally?
- 🕯 Do you think there might be some who do it for personal gain or just out of responsibility? Discuss.
- 🕯 How does God feel about aging? (*1 Kings 3:14; Proverbs 20:29, 23:22; 1 Timothy 5:1-2.*)
- 🕯 Should we not, also, honor old age, especially our parents? (*Exodus 20:12; Proverbs 20:20*)
- 🕯 Do you ever go to visit in a nursing home, assisted living facility, or Veterans’ Home? (*Most have special times such as Christmas, Valentine’s Day, Easter, or events where visitors are welcomed—Psalm 71:9; Isaiah 46:4.*)
- 🕯 Are we afraid to get involved in other peoples’ lives?
- 🕯 Who are the people you give the most attention to?
- 🕯 What does your devotion to God look like? Do you pray, worship, give?
- 🕯 What are some ways you can show devotion and care for others in your church? (*Prayer for their needs, cards and words of encouragement, fix a meal or give a gift card for food, go with them to doctor’s appointments if needed, and many more ways.*)
- 🕯 Do you look for ways to help others?
- 🕯 Should we neglect our responsibilities to God or the church because of our other areas of devotion? (*No, read Matthew 6:33*)
- 🕯 Are you thankful to be in the “Family of God”? Read the words to this gospel song (p. 344, *The Free Will Baptist Hymn Book, REJOICE*).
- 🕯 Write *Abba, Father* in your journal

Reflection: Dismiss in prayer and thank God for your parents and others God has entrusted with your care.

My Name is Devotion

SPIRITUAL DEVOTION TO OTHERS

Key Verse: “It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles” (Luke 24:10).

Key Thought: Spiritual devotion involves both living out our faith and sharing the good news of His Resurrection with others, including those in our families.

- 🕯 Go over the questions and answers together on p. 43 in *Treasure*.
- 🕯 Think back over your life. Who provided the most teaching and guidance toward your spiritual life? Have you ever thanked this person for being a part of your life?
- 🕯 Are we required to share our faith with others? (*Psalm 107:2; Isaiah 43:10; Hebrews 2:12; 2 Corinthians 4:13*)
- 🕯 Why would we need to tell others about Jesus? (*People relate to personal experiences—Psalm 66:16; To tell of God’s blessings—Isaiah 63:7; to not keep it hidden—Acts 4:20; to not be ashamed—2 Timothy 1:8; to sound His praises before others—Ephesians 5:19-20.*)
- 🕯 What do your children see you doing each day? Jewish children were taught from early childhood. Name some Biblical children who stand out. (*Jesus—Luke 2:40; Samuel—1 Samuel 1:24-28; 2:18; Moses—Exodus 2:8-9; Acts 7:22; Esther—Esther 2:7.*)
- 🕯 How did these people show their devotion to others? (*Jesus died for everyone’s salvation—Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 2:24; Samuel anointed David as future king of Israel—1 Samuel 16:11-13; Moses led his people out of Egypt—Exodus 12:30-31, 14:28-31; Esther saved the Jewish race—Esther 7:3-6.*)
- 🕯 Did Mary Magdalene realize she was devoted to the Son of God, or did she think He was just a wonderful person who had helped to cure her of the seven devils (*Mark 16:9*)?
- 🕯 The disciples and the women who followed Him (*Luke 23:55*) had been told He was the Son of God and would return again (*Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; Luke 24:6-7*). Why then were they so surprised when they did not find His body in the tomb (*Luke 24:11*)?
- 🕯 Recall the scene in John 20:16-18. Mary now *knew* Jesus was the Son of God and fully accepted that He died for her and had come back to life. Mary Magdalene did her work for Jesus as Christian women everywhere should. That being to follow, honor, and glorify Him in all you do (*Colossians 3:23*).
- 🕯 Write these names of God in your journal: The Way, The Truth, and The Life.

Reflection: Dismiss in prayer and thank God for being our Father and our God. Praise His glorious name in your prayer.