

Every Mother, a Mary

As we search the Scriptures, we can find six Marys in the New Testament.

1. MARY, THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD; THE VIRTUOUS MARY

Luke 1:26, 27: "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary."

We learn so many things from Mary, the mother of our Lord. We learn the value of a virtuous life. We also learn the importance of following Jesus and giving Him preeminence. John 2:5: "His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." We also learn that motherhood will be a heartbreaking experience. Luke 2:35: "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

2. MARY MAGDALENE; THE GIVING MARY

Luke 8:2, 3: "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."

From Mary Magdalene we learn that we should never allow the unredeemed or formerly backslidden life to define who we are. She rose so far above her previous lifestyle that she was the first person to witness the resurrected Savior! We also learn something that is not often mentioned and that is, we are to serve the Lord with our substance. She, Joanna and Susanna actually appeared to help support Jesus and the disciples with earnings from their work. Proverbs 3:9, 10: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."

3. MARY OF BETHANY; THE WORSHIPPING MARY

Luke 10:42: "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:39: "And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word."

Jesus called the attitude and action of Mary, the "needful" thing. It was well and good that Martha served Jesus, but Jesus was after the heart. Service without heart worship will wear you out. Service with a worshipful heart will refresh you. Matthew 11:30: "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

4. MARY, THE WIFE OF CLEOPHAS (CLEOPAS); THE SURRENDERED MARY

John 19:25: "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene."

Tradition holds that she was Mary's (Jesus' mother) sister-in-law; making Cleopas and Joseph (husband of Mary) brothers. When comparing Matthew

27:56 and Mark 15:40, Bible scholars have asserted that she is the mother of James the Less. She was also the “other Mary” at the tomb with Mary Magdalene (Matthew 27:61; Mark 15:47). I personally believe she was the other disciple with her husband on the road to Emmaus who heard the greatest Bible prophecy lesson concerning Jesus, the Messiah given by our Lord Himself (Luke 24:13-35)!

We learn from this Mary the blessing of being centered in the will of God at the right place and the right time. She mothered the disciple, James the Less, she was at the cross and then, along with her husband, was given insight that even Peter, James and John did not get in on.

5. MARY, THE MOTHER OF JOHN MARK; THE STEADFAST MARY

Acts 12:12: “And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying.” We learn from Mary, John Mark’s mother the lesson of being faithful to Christ and never giving up on our child. John Mark seemed to be the young man following Jesus from a distance, but ran when confronted (Mark 14:51, 52). Paul gave up on him (Acts 15:37-40), but by the time his life was coming to an end, he saw how John Mark was “...profitable to me for the ministry” (II Timothy 4:11b).

6. MARY, THE HELPER; THE HARD WORKING MARY

Romans 16:6: “Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us.”

Adam Clarke said about this verse: “Who this Mary was, or what the labor was which she bestowed upon the apostles, we know not.” Her works, though hidden from man, are known to God; and her name is recorded with honor in the Bible. Another commentator said, “Mary is described as a hard worker because labor (*kopiaio*) denoted hard work, the pains of labor and strain-both physical and mental.”

CONCLUSION:

There is a story in the name Mary. We see that Mary in the New Testament is actually taken from the Hebrew root of Miriam. Miriam was the sister of Moses and God used her to save the life of Israel’s great leader (Exodus 2:3-10). The name Miriam means “bitter.” Exodus 15:20 the Bible refers to Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron as “...the prophetess.” But in Exodus 12:1 it says, “And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses....” Although Aaron was included in the rebel spirit against Moses, Miriam seemed to be the ring leader, because we observe the chastening came on Miriam. Notice Numbers 12:2: “And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it.” God struck Miriam with leprosy, but then cured her. And later in the Old Testament God gives this testimony in Micah 6:4: “For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.” We see Miriam had developed a bitter spirit, but God delivered her from her bitterness

and back to the same adolescent sweetness that God used to deliver Moses back into his mother's arms when Moses' very life was threatened.

There is the story of Naomi from the book of Ruth that gives great lessons. After losing her husband and two sons in a heathen land (Moab), she comes back home to Bethlehem-Judah. When acquaintances recognize Naomi after being away for so many years, she replies, Ruth 1:20: "And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." So, Naomi takes a derivative form of Miriam or Mary, calling herself Mara, which means the same, "bitter." But then we see Naomi, which means "pleasantness" is returned to a very sweet spirit, when she ends up grandmothing Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David, the progenitor of Jesus (Ruth 4:13-17).

Finally, there is a beautiful story found in Exodus 15:23-26. The bitter Israelites were murmuring because they were thirsty and they came to the waters of Marah (meaning bitter), but they could not drink because the water was bitter, which meant the water was poisonous. There is a poisonousness that accompanies a bitter spirit. Exodus 15:25a: "And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet...." This is a prophecy that through the cross, we find a cure for our poisoned state. The tree into the bitter waters is what heals! Exodus 15:26: "And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee."

As we have meditated on the Marys of the Bible, we see women who became some of the sweetest in the Bible and it is all the result of the cross. Even the virtuous Mary exclaimed, "...My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Luke 1:46, 47). Mary was sweet not only because she carried Jesus as a babe, but, even more importantly, He carried her as her Savior.

Christ drank our bitter cup. John 18:11: "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" And because He took our bitter sin, we can find the sweetness that comes from His cross. Yes, every mother can find that she, like all the Marys in the Bible, can become redeemed and find true purpose in living. And we all can discover that same sweetness and purpose in Christ alone.

-Pastor Pope-