

"Lucidly done and without any dumbing down, these stories pull off the difficult trick of being time-honouring and contemporary." Andrew Motion, Poet Laureate 1999–2009



MARY MAGDALENE

**My darkness lifted, never to return.
This man was truly the light of the world.**

Mary's childhood in Magdala leaves her with emotional scars she fears will never heal – until she meets Jesus.

Recognising the importance of Jesus's work, she decides to do all that she can to support him, but what good can a woman do in a man's world?

Will Mary ever be accepted by Jesus's other disciples? What will she learn from the miracles she witnesses and from her many conversations with the Son of God? To Mary the message seems simple, so why can't others believe?



After witnessing Jesus's agonising death, Mary is the first to see the empty tomb, the first to see the risen Christ. What role can she play in spreading the news about Jesus after his death?

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THE CHARACTERS



Mary Magdalene

Jesus brings light into Mary's dark life. How can she help him?
What important role will she play?

Sarah

Anxious to help Mary, Sarah invites her to listen to a visiting preacher. Little does she know where this will lead.



Jesus

Jesus wants to show everybody the light that Mary has seen.
Why do they find it so difficult to believe him?



Simon Peter

Simon Peter is a true and trusted friend of Jesus. How will he respond to Mary Magdalene when she joins the group?

Judas

Judas is in charge of the disciples' money. How will this affect his relationship with Mary Magdalene?



Pharisees

Insisting upon the Jewish law, these men find Jesus a difficult man to understand.



John

John is one of Jesus's disciples. What important responsibility will he be given?





MARY MAGDALENE

I wonder what people will say about me in the future. Will they be able to accept that a woman could be a devoted follower of God's son? Will they accept the nature of my love for Jesus?

When he was alive, I would have died for him. Now, a year after his death, I have devoted my life to spreading his word. Yes – at this point in history I am free to play this role. I wonder how history will view this time. How will it view me?



I grew up in Magdala, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. My parents, devout Jews, were gentle and loving. They taught me the scriptures and Jewish laws. All in all, the first twelve years of my life were very happy years, unspoilt by any foreboding of what lay ahead.

My happiness ended not long after my twelfth birthday. My father died of a sudden illness, leaving me and my mother heartbroken. In spite of her grief, mother had to take care of me. Having no money of her own, she had to remarry. My new stepfather was an angry and violent man who treated me and my mother terribly. I feared and hated him.

However, mother had achieved her goal. He was a wealthy man whose eventual death when I was twenty-two left us financially independent.

But what good is money when your mind and soul are damaged? That was me throughout my twenties. I was prone to regular deep depressions in which my mind spiralled uncontrollably downwards. In those periods, nothing could lift me. The future seemed dark, very dark.



I was terrified of men. I tried to avoid company whenever possible, preferring to be alone in my darkness. I hated meeting strangers. I certainly didn't want to accept an invitation to a family wedding in Cana, but my mother insisted. 'You don't have to stay long, Mary. Just show your face. Please.'

Cana is a small town to the west of Magdala. I set off reluctantly, unaware that this was the beginning of a new life – a journey towards light.

Life in New Testament times

The main events of Mary Magdalene's life took place in Palestine, a long narrow area of land bordered to the west by the Mediterranean Sea and to the east by the Transjordanian Desert. Some parts of Palestine were desert, some were hill country, some rich pasture land, and some uncultivated wilderness. Mary was probably born in Magdala, on the western shore of Lake Galilee, an area with a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles, and a reputation for political unrest. She was probably from a wealthy family and she had wealthy friends.

Although Palestine was Jewish land, it was part of the Roman Empire and under Roman control. The Jews resented paying taxes to Rome. During Jesus's lifetime, there was considerable conflict between the Jews and their Roman rulers. This helps to explain why the Romans might have been nervous of the crowds following Jesus. It also helps to explain

