

Text: Mark 15:40-41; Matthew 28:1-10
Title: “Cracking the Da Vinci Code” Pt.4

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles with me to Mark 15:40-41. Any honest reading of the NT will reveal that women played an important role in the ministry of Jesus and the early church. And one of the women mentioned often in the Gospels is a woman by the name of Mary Magdalene. Scholars believe her name means she was Mary from the city of Magdala on the Sea of Galilee. Notice what Mark tells us about the events shortly after the death of Jesus. Read text.

Now today I’m wrapping up this series entitled “Cracking the Da Vinci Code” Estimates are now that the book, published in 2003, with the publishing of the book now in paperback, sales have soared to 46 million. Nothing has come close to it. Why has it been so popular? An article in yesterday’s Dallas Morning News asked the question, why is the book so popular. The first thing mentioned is not that it is a page-turner of a novel, but that its theme has to do with the role of women and spirituality.

What does “The Da Vinci Code” have to do with the role of women? It starts with the name of the book. The claim is that the great artist Leonardo da Vinci was a member of an organization known as the Priory of Sion. Incidentally, we’re 99% sure the Priory was a hoax in spite of Brown’s asserting it was fact on the first page of the novel. But the Priory was a small band of conspirators who were protecting a secret. They knew the “truth” about the marriage of Jesus to Mary Magdalene. Their mission was to pass this secret knowledge along by using messages that were encrypted in writings, architecture, and art ... thus “The Da Vinci Code.” So the argument is that we find hidden messages, for instance in Leonardo Da Vinci’s The Last Supper, that Mary Magdalene was the Holy Grail, the wife of Jesus and the mother of his child.

This is all so intriguing because supposedly the church doesn’t want this secret out in public, because the male leadership of the church for 2000 years wanted to diminish the role of women. And I admit that there is a cynical tone set all the way through the book about the role of women in Christianity.

Joining me on the platform today once again is our friend, Dr. Craig Blaising.

BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW WITH BLAISING

The contention running all the way through the book is that the big coverup that has gone on for 2000 years revolves around Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus’ female followers. For instance, Brown has Teabing saying that Mary Magdalene was the object of a smear campaign that painted her as a prostitute.

QUESTIONS: Was Mary Magdalene a prostitute? Where did that false ascription come from?

Brown says the purpose of this smear campaign was clear. From p.244-245: “The Church needed to defame Mary Magdalene in order to cover up her dangerous secret – her role as the Holy Grail ... As

I mentioned, the early church needed to convince the world that the mortal prophet Jesus was a divine being. Therefore, any gospels that described earthly aspects of Jesus' life had to be omitted from the Bible. Unfortunately for the early editors, one particularly troubling earthly theme kept recurring in the gospels. Mary Magdalene ... More specifically her marriage to Jesus Christ."

"Jesus as a married man makes infinitely more sense than our standard biblical view of Jesus as a bachelor ... The social decorum during that time virtually forbid a Jewish man to be unmarried. According to Jewish custom, celibacy was condemned, and the obligation for a Jewish father was to find a suitable wife for his son. If Jesus were not married, at least one of the Bible's gospels would have mentioned it and offered some explanation for His unnatural state of bachelorhood."

QUESTIONS: So, Craig, how do we respond to this? If Jesus and Mary had been married and even had a child, would that create a problem for us?

From pp.245-246: "The earliest Christian records ... do not match up with the gospels in the Bible." Flipping toward the middle of the book, Teabing pointed to a passage. "The Gospel of Philip is always a good place to start."

(Teabing lets Sophie read these words, supposedly from the Gospel of Philip.) "*And the companion of the Saviour is Mary Magdalene. Christ loved her more than all the disciples...*"

"As any Aramiac scholar will tell you, the word 'companion,' in those days, literally meant *spouse*."

QUESTION: Supposedly, here is a document more reliable than any of the Four Gospels. Is this proof that Mary was Jesus' wife?

Now there's another assertion made by Brown, that this affection that Jesus had toward Mary Magdalene really made Peter jealous. From p.247-248: "The stakes were far greater than mere affection. At this point in the gospels, Jesus suspects He will soon be captured and crucified. So He gives Mary Magdalene instructions on how to carry on His church after He is gone. As a result, Peter expresses his discontent over playing second fiddle to a woman. I daresay Peter was something of a sexist."

"According to these unaltered gospels, it was not *Peter* to whom Christ gave directions with which to establish the Christian Church. It was *Mary Magdalene*." Sophie looked at him. "You're saying the Christian Church was to be carried on by a *woman*?"

"That was the plan. Jesus was the original feminist. He intended for the future of His Church to be in the hands of Mary Magdalene."

QUESTIONS: Where did this idea come from? Was this Jesus' intent? There's a note of pessimism about the church when it comes to women all the way through "The Da Vinci Code." Suppose a woman reads "The Da Vinci Code" and comes away thinking, "I've known it all along. Christians are really just anti-women." What do we say to that?

In spite of all the controversy swirling around Mary Magdalene, unquestionably she is a towering model for Christ-honoring women.

Women are featured prominently in the Gospels, and specifically in the climax of the Gospels. They are the heroes in the last chapter of Christ's earthly biography.

1. A CHRIST-HONORING WOMAN WALKS WITH JESUS (Mark 15:40-41).

Mark 15:40-41 – Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

When it says in v.41 that “these women had followed him,” the word for “followed” is the very same word that was used when Jesus called Peter and Andrew to leave their family fishing business. It says that “they immediately left the nets, and followed him” (Matt.4:19 NASB). It was a way of describing discipleship ... following Jesus ... walking with Jesus.

Challenge: Ladies, you're highest calling above being a wife and a mom, is to be a disciple of Jesus. You're walk with Him is the fountain from which everything else flows.

I remember recently hearing the testimony of one of our men as he told the mark that his mother made upon his life. He said that his mom would let him sit in her lap as she had her quiet time in the mornings. Can you imagine what an imprint that left upon his life? As a boy he watched his mom walk with Jesus, and that was a powerful influence upon him.

A Christ-honoring woman walks with Jesus. Also ...

2. A CHRIST-HONORING WOMAN WORKS FOR JESUS (Mark 15:41).

Mark 15:41 – In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Mary Magdalene and the other women who followed Jesus also would care for His needs. The word literally means to serve, wait upon or minister to someone. In fact, it's the word from which we get our word “deacon.”

Whoa! You mean these women were deacons? Well, not exactly. The word for service comes in a verb form and in a noun form in the Bible. As a verb, “deaconing” or service, refers to ministry done by men and women. As a noun, the word also describes an office in the church which the NT clearly spells out is to be help by a male.

In fact, when it comes to gender roles in the family and in the church, there are two primary points of view. One says that men and women are equal in every way, and that what men do, women can do, and what women do, men can do. This is true at home and in the church.

The other viewpoint also asserts that men and women are equal in every way, but their roles are not the same. There are some things that God wants men to do, that He doesn't want

women to do. And there are some things that God wants women to do that He doesn't want men to do. And these roles are complimentary, not superior/inferior, but complimentary.

Now some will argue that this is all about "power." Yes, as a matter of fact, it is. And I want to tell you who really has the "power." At home, a man make think he's powerful, but it's the mom whose face that little baby first must recognize. It's the bonding with mom that is the single greatest factor in a child's development. You talk about power.

A mother's job as a homemaker is her greatest service to and work for the Lord. Sometimes moms have to work outside the home in matters of hardship and necessity, but a mom must always know that her first priority is in the home.

In the church, pastors or deacons may think they have "power." But I want to tell you who really has the power. Our church kids may not know me or one of our deacons. But I'm telling you, the most "powerful," the most influential people in our church are the ones who sit in the floors with our preschoolers and children and love on them in Jesus name. They are the influencers in our church. And more than 50% of them, I might add, are women.

Christ-honoring woman walk with Jesus and work for Jesus, but also ...

3. A CHRIST-HONORING WOMAN WORSHIPS JESUS (Matthew 28:8-9).

Now slip over with me to Matthew 28 where Matthew picks up the story of the days after the death of Jesus. On Easter Sunday some of the women, including our friend Mary Magdalene, went to the tomb of Jesus. There they were met by an angel who announced to them that Jesus was not in the tomb ... He was alive!

Matthew 28:8-9 - So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.

Ladies, one of the greatest and most-fulfilling experiences of your life is to worship Jesus. Higher than your calling as a wife and a mom is your calling to worship Him ... and to help your children worship Him.

I watched my wife Nan do this with our daughters when they were little. On Sundays she would awaken our girls singing to them. "Happy Sunday morning. Happy Sunday morning. We read the Bible, sing and pray, on this happy morning."

4. A CHRIST-HONORING WOMAN WITNESSES FOR JESUS (Matthew 28:10).

Jesus gave Mary Magdalene and the other women an important mission. Jesus told the women to go and be a witness to the men.

Matthew 28:10 - Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

I would say that some of the greatest preachers in America today are women who "preach to" and witness to a congregation of one or two or three, sometimes more ... a mom to her children.

CONCLUSION

Are you walking with Jesus ... working for Jesus ... worshipping Jesus ... witnessing for Him?