

Women Who Met  
the  
Master

ENCOUNTERING JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

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*Women Who Met the Master*

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# *Preface*

JESUS SET A WONDERFUL EXAMPLE through the love and compassion He showed to women. His interactions with women were quite contrary to the culture of the Jewish people. In the culture of Jesus' day, the rabbis did not speak to women in public, and it was not common for women to be taught religious truth. Rather than being condescending to women like other Jewish men were, Jesus treated them with respect and communicated that He saw them as persons of value and worth. His respectful treatment was revolutionary and reflected His attitudes and actions just as consistently as His other teachings.

The Talmud is a printed collection of ancient Jewish thought. It includes many of the oral traditions of Jesus' day, such as rules and prayers. Through these writings, we are able to gain much insight into the culture. In reciting daily prayers, it was common for Jewish men to speak the following three-fold thanksgiving:

*Praised be God that he has not created me a gentile; praised be God that created me not a woman; praised be God that he has not created me an ignorant man (Menahot 43b).*

Another Rabbinic teaching asserts:

*Let the words of the Law (Torah) be burned rather than be committed to a woman . . . If a man teaches his daughter the Law, it is as though he taught her lechery (Sotah 3.4).*

Instead of affirming those traditions, Jesus spoke to women publicly, taught women spiritual truth, touched them and permitted them to touch Him, healed them, allowed women to travel with Him, praised their service and faith, accepted their worship, and considered them to be valid witnesses.

Jesus never humiliated nor exploited a woman. He accepted questions and requests seriously and responded

without flattery, coaxing, patronizing, joking, or condescension. There is no record in the Gospels of a woman who denied Him, deserted Him, or betrayed Him. According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, women remained at the cross after the death of Jesus, and all four of the Gospel writers record that women were the first to appear at the tomb after His resurrection.

This study examines each of the occasions recorded by the writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in which Jesus spoke to a woman or a girl. Each account will be examined in the order that it happened, but when a particular character is referenced in multiple accounts, all of those events will be addressed in the same lesson.

## L E S S O N 1

# *Jesus' Interactions with Women* **An Overview**

DURING MANY OF THE MORE challenging times in my life, I have wanted to listen to audible words from Jesus, ask questions and receive verbal answers, hear an absolute answer, feel His physical touch of comfort, see His eyes of forgiveness, and even crawl onto His lap and into His embrace for the assurance of His love and care. I have wondered what it must have been like to meet Him on a path, to eat a meal with Him, or to sit at His feet while He taught. In the Gospels, we can read many accounts of His personal encounters and conversations with women, and we have the privilege of listening in, learning from them, and having our lives changed because of His words. His words to women years ago contain messages for us as well.

### **Personal Recall**

1. When you think of women Jesus addressed in the Gospels, who comes to mind?
2. Do you have a favorite story of a woman with whom Jesus personally interacted? If so, who is it?

3. Think about the opportunity to approach Jesus directly as He walked as a man on the earth. What are some of the needs and requests you would expect women to communicate to Him?

## Personal Discovery

In each of the following passages, Jesus addresses a woman. As you look at each set of verses, determine to whom Jesus spoke. Then record the words Jesus spoke.

Passage	Setting	Person Addressed	Jesus' Words
Luke 2:41–50	Mary and Joseph had taken Jesus to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. Jesus stayed behind when the family joined others for the return to Nazareth. His parents found Him in the temple.		
John 2:1–11	There was a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The embarrassing situation of the shortage of wine was presented to Jesus, and He performed His first recorded miracle.		
John 19:26, 27	From His physical position on the cross, Jesus saw His mother and John standing nearby.		
John 4:5–42	Jesus departed from social custom and initiated a conversation at a public well with an immoral woman of a different culture. As He allowed her to ask questions, He showed respectful consideration for her and offered her that which she needed most.		



Passage	Setting	Person Addressed	Jesus' Words
Matthew 8:14, 15; Mark 1:29–31; Luke 4:38, 39	After leaving the synagogue, Jesus arrived at the house of two of His disciples. Jesus departed from culturally acceptable behavior after family members appealed to Him on behalf of an ill woman.		The Bible does not record anything said directly to her.
Luke 7:11–17	While traveling with a crowd, Jesus met a large funeral procession on its way out of the city to the burial site.		
Luke 7:36–50	At a dinner given for Jesus at the home of a Pharisee, a woman anointed Jesus' feet. In response to the judgmental Pharisee, Jesus offered a verbal defense.		
Matthew 27:55, 56; Mark 15:40, 41; Luke 8:1–3; 23:49	Jesus allowed some who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases to be disciples who followed Him and supported His ministry financially out of their own means. Some of these women were recognized by name as they watched His crucifixion from a distance.		The Bible does not record anything Jesus said specifically to them, except to the mother of James and John (see below) and to them as a group (see below).
Matthew 9:20–22; Mark 5:26–34; Luke 8:43–48	When Jesus was on His way to the home of a synagogue ruler, a woman touched Him with full confidence that the touch would be accompanied by healing.		
Matthew 9:18, 19, 23–26; Mark 5:21–24, 35–43; Luke 8:41, 42, 49–56	A synagogue ruler approached Jesus and implored Him to heal his daughter. While they were on their way, a messenger communicated that the girl had already died.		

Passage	Setting	Person Addressed	Jesus' Words
Matthew 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30	When a woman of a different ethnicity begged Jesus for help with her daughter, Jesus' disciples asked Him to ignore her. Instead, He responded to her argument of faith.		
John 8:1–11	A woman was used as bait in a ploy to trap Jesus, but He skillfully dismissed those who accused her.		
Luke 10:38–42	Jesus and His disciples were guests for dinner in the home of two sisters and a brother. One of the sisters prepared the dinner while the other one listened to Jesus' teachings. The hostess appealed to Jesus out of frustration when her sister did not offer help with the meal preparation.		
John 11:1–44	After the death of their brother, Jesus interacted with each of the sisters individually.		
Matthew 26:6–13; Mark 14:3–9; John 12:2–8	While Jesus was a dinner guest, a woman worshiped Him in a way that provoked indignation and objection from His disciples. Jesus' response was countercultural in defending a woman's action before a group of men.		
Luke 11:27, 28	While Jesus was teaching about the work of an evil spirit, a woman called out a blessing in a disruptive way. Instead of ignoring her, Jesus corrected her about the greater and more important thing that will be blessed.		

Passage	Setting	Person Addressed	Jesus' Words
Luke 13:10–17	Jesus healed a woman on the Sabbath, in the synagogue, and in the presence of the synagogue ruler. In doing so, He publicly showed concern and regard for someone whom others probably had shunned for years.		
Matthew 20:20–23; 27:55, 56	A mother entreated Jesus for a personal favor, but she did not understand the ramifications of her request. Her ambitious desire for her sons invoked an explanation of truth about being a servant. She was one of the women who were recognized by name as they watched the crucifixion from a distance.		
Luke 23:28–31	Jesus addressed a small segment of the crowd that was mourning and lamenting Him as they followed Him to execution.		
Luke 8:2	Jesus had cast seven demons out of a woman. She became a disciple of Jesus.		Nothing Jesus said to her is recorded until after the Resurrection (see below).
Mark 15:47; 16:9; John 20:11–18	She observed His place of burial. Jesus made His first post-resurrection appearance to her. Though she initially thought the risen Jesus was a gardener, she recognized Him when He said one word. Jesus then gave her the countercultural license and authority to give the first testimony of His resurrection.		

In studying the accounts of Jesus' interactions with women in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (the Gospels), it has been amazing to see the balance between the opportunities Jesus gave to women as well as those He gave to men. As Vickie Kraft and Gwynne Johnson point out in *Women Mentoring Women*, the Bible records songs by both Mary and Zacharias. Both Simeon and Anna welcomed Jesus in the temple. Jesus talked about new birth with the Samaritan woman as well as with Nicodemus. Peter confessed Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," and Mary of Bethany confessed, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world." Both a man and a woman were healed in a synagogue. Both a daughter and a son were raised from the dead. Both men and women traveled with Jesus.

Jesus ministered to women as the One Who gave dignity and value to their abilities to think well as students, worship well as believers, and minister well as servants. He did this by speaking to them, teaching them, and commending them. In the gospel accounts, He revealed Himself to women and gave them the opportunity to be changed by Him. Without distinction to gender, Jesus has given every believer the duty and high privilege of learning of Him, believing Him, loving Him, serving Him, and witnessing for Him.

### **Personal Reflection**

4. Have you met Jesus through the pages of Scripture? Have you believed on Him as your Savior? Are you His disciple, learning from and following Him?

5. If you have received Jesus as your Savior, reflect upon some of the ways God has changed you since that time, when your relationship with Jesus Christ began. What are some of the areas in which you know that the changes in you came through listening to Jesus?
  
6. What a privilege it is to be able to learn of Christ, to believe Him, to love Him, to serve Him, and to witness for Him. Write a prayer that expresses your desire to focus on the privileges He has given you.