



BY DIRECTOR-SPEAKER
DOUG BATCHELOR

AT JESUS' FEET

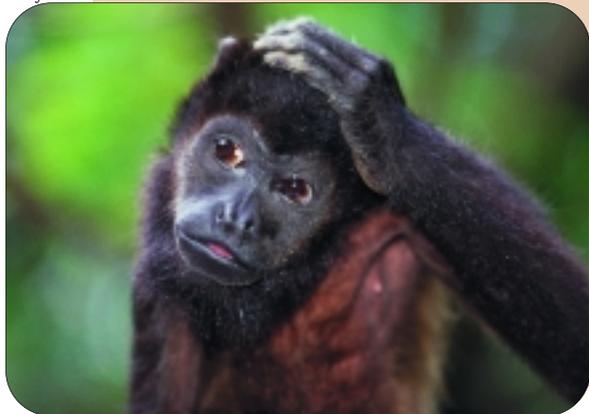


Don Satterlee

An Amazing Fact:

Monkey trappers in North Africa have a clever method of catching their prey. They fill a number of gourds with nuts and chain them firmly to a tree. Each has a hole just large enough to allow an unsuspecting monkey to stick his hand inside the hollowed-out gourd. When the hungry animal discovers this hole and the treasure waiting inside, he quickly grabs a handful of nuts. However, the hole is too small for him to withdraw his bulging, clenched fist. And he doesn't have enough sense to open up his hand and release the deceptive booty in order to escape, so he is easily taken captive.

Eyewire



The tendency to cling tenaciously to tempting treasure plagues unsuspecting humans and monkeys alike. The devil traps many Christians by appealing to their natural greed and carnal appetites, which lead to their spiritual downfall. As long as people hold onto the worldly bait, they cannot escape from Satan's trap.

Let Go and Let God

We've all heard the tempter's alluring voice urging, "Don't let go!" And the Bible is filled with examples of men and women who fell into one of Satan's cleverly laid traps.

One of my favorite examples is Mary Magdalene. Her fame doesn't come from the coveted traits the world typically associates with greatness. Mary occupied a special place among the followers of Jesus because she demonstrated three traits worthy of merit: a great love, a tenacious loyalty, and a perfect devotion.

Before she met the Savior, however, Mary was living a life that was dirty, broken, and helpless. Like the senseless monkey caught in a trap, her choices held her firmly in bondage to the evil one. The Bible says Jesus delivered Mary from seven demons (Luke 8:2), and I believe the devil waged a long and fierce strug-

gle to maintain control of her soul. Mary was rescued from bondage because she made a conscious choice to “Let go and let God.”

Of course, it is impossible to “let God” do anything until we first “let go” of everything and everyone else! That’s right. Even people mustn’t take priority over our relationship with God! The first and greatest commandment is to “love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (Mark 12:30). Then, secondarily, we are commanded to “love thy neighbour as thyself” (verse 31). Jesus also told His followers, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:37, NKJV).

The good news is that whoever has the faith to trust God and surrender all for Christ’s sake will be abundantly compensated, in this life and in the next (Mark 10:29-30).

It Costs How Much?

Kneeling at Jesus’ feet in sacrifice and service was, in many respects, Mary’s finest hour. Jesus immortalized her deed at Simon’s feast by declaring that “wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her” (Mark 14:9, NKJV).

Similarly, Jesus commended the widow who cast her last two coins into the offering box because she gave everything she had to God (Luke 21:1-4). It may sound radical or even scary, but to be saved requires a total surrender—a total sacrifice.

Mary gave her all to Jesus. She provided for Him not only during His public ministry (Luke 8:2-3), but she also gave lavishly when she bought the alabaster box of perfume for His anointing.

Overwhelmed by a fresh appreciation for Jesus and all He had done for her, Mary redirected her attention to finding a worthy gift for the Master. If necessary, she would empty her purse to do so. The money she had saved from her former life and from selling her place in Magdala was a substantial sum, yet it was a constant reminder to her of the wages of sin. Mary determined to spend all of her savings, if necessary, to purchase a noble present as an offering to the Lord.*

Many never experience the fullness of God’s peace and power because they make only a partial surrender to Him. The Lord can fill our vessels only to the extent that we empty them.

Is the Lord asking all of us to liquidate 100 percent of our assets and give them as an offering? Not necessarily, but He is asking us to put everything on the altar and then be willing to do whatever He directs. He is asking for a no-strings-attached commitment.

An Amazing Fact:

When I was first learning to fly, my flight instructor spent a day teaching me to do stalls. To stall an airplane means to bring it to the slowest speed you possibly can while still maintaining flight, then to build up air speed and regain control after the plane begins to drop. Mastery of this technique can help a pilot survive a possible emergency.

At one point while I was practicing these stalls, something happened that was a little out of the ordinary. The flight instructor had given me complete control of the plane. I pulled the power back and aimed the plane up until it was going slower and slower. Eventually the warning buzzer went off, but instead of the plane just nosing down and regaining speed, it nosed off onto the side and went into a spin.

To get a better picture of what was happening, just imagine yourself sitting behind the wheel of your car after you have been dropped from an airplane. It would be like driving toward the ground at 120 miles per hour while you’re spinning in circles!

Well, my first reaction was to pull back. I had been taught to pull back on the yoke, or steering column, to make the plane go up. However, there wasn’t enough air speed to get any reaction from the steering controls. With all of my strength I was pulling back—until I almost pulled the yoke out of the panel. We were only 3,000 feet in the air, and the ground was coming up fast. I didn’t see my life flash before me, but I almost had a glimpse of my lunch!

Suddenly I heard my flight instructor calmly say: “Let go, Doug. Let go. I’ve got it!”

I didn’t want to let go. What if he didn’t know what he was doing? What if he killed us both? In those few seconds, I went through a tremendous struggle. Could I trust my flight instructor? Did he know how to get us out of this dilemma?

I realized that I had no great alternative, because I certainly didn’t know what I was doing. So I released my grip. The flight instructor took the yoke, pushed it completely forward, and gave the throttle full power. Now the plane was going toward the ground even faster. But as the wind began to pass over the wings, the steering column regained some response, and he pulled it up with a great powerful arc that left my stomach down somewhere near my left ankle.

One of the biggest battles (if not *the* biggest battle) Christians face is coming to the place of making a complete surrender where we can say, “Not my will, but Thy will be done.” This was the battle Jesus fought on our behalf when He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, sweating drops of blood in agony. “O my Father,” He pleaded, “if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39).



Pilot Doug Batchelor

An Amazing Fact:

Saving tears shed for a good cause was an ancient Eastern custom mentioned by David in Psalm 56:8.

At Simon's feast, Mary washed the Savior's feet with her tears (Luke 7:37-38). Like others in her era, Mary had probably purchased a blue glass flask as her tear bottle.



Don Satterlee

Humble Service

A hospital visitor once saw a nurse tending to the ugly sores of a leprosy patient and said, "I'd never do that for a million dollars!"

The nurse answered: "Neither would I. But I do it for Jesus for nothing." Genuine love is willing to serve without any remuneration or even recognition.

The world defines success by what kind of car a man drives, what kind of clothes a woman wears, or what kind of house a family owns. With the Lord, it's not what kind of car a man drives; it's what kind of man drives the car. With God, the issue is what kind of woman wears the dress and what kind of family lives in the house. Man looks on the outward appearances, while God looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

The Bible teaches that a woman's hair is her glory (1 Corinthians 11:15.) The visual message inherent in Mary's act of wiping Jesus' feet with her hair was one of humble service, submission, worship, and surrender.

Because all eyes were transfixed on Jesus as He spoke, no one noticed when Mary softly slipped into the room and knelt quietly by the Master's feet. She had been breathless with fear, but now kneeling at His feet, a familiar peace settled over her. She sensed that she was safe under the everlasting wings of the Almighty. Mary silently prayed that Jesus would approve of her deed of love. What the others thought was of no consequence to her.

With loving tenderness, she broke the seal on the alabaster flask and poured some of the contents of precious oil liberally over Jesus' feet. Jesus did not even flinch. He simply paused in His discourse, smiled to acknowledge to Mary that He was aware of her act of service and sacrifice, then continued His conversation.

As the fragrant oil ran down Jesus' feet, a drop spilled onto the tile floor. Realizing that in her haste she had forgotten to bring a cloth or towel to evenly spread the ointment, Mary removed the shawl covering her head and, without a second thought, released

her long, luxuriously rich brown hair from the ties that contained it. Then she began wiping His feet, spreading the oil with her hair.

F.B. Meyer once said: "I used to think that God's gifts were on shelves one above the other and that the taller we grew in Christian character, the more easily we should reach them. I find now that God's gifts are on shelves one beneath the other. It is not a question of growing taller but of stooping lower; that we have to go down, always down, to get His best gifts."

The Anointed

In ancient times, Israel's priests and kings were ceremonially anointed with oil as a sign of official appointment to office and as a symbol of God's Spirit and power upon them. Moses anointed Aaron with oil to consecrate him as Israel's first high priest (Leviticus 8:12-13), and the prophet Elisha commanded his servant to anoint Captain Jehu with oil to seal him as king (2 Kings 9:3).

Consequently, when Mary anointed the Lord in Simon's house, it was a gesture of tremendous significance. Just before the cross, Jesus was being sealed as our King, Priest, and Sacrifice!

Mary was so absorbed in the joy of serving Jesus that she was oblivious to the stunned reactions of the guests seated around the table. Soon after she broke open the alabaster flask, the room quickly filled with the profusion of a costly, exotic essence. The conversation in the room quieted to a tense murmur. Even the servants froze, not certain as to what they should do about the situation.

Mary now felt the piercing stares of all present. Fearing someone might try to prohibit her from completing her mission, she resolutely stood and poured the remaining oil on Jesus' head amid gasps of astonishment and shock. Mary's unmistakable act was the traditional symbol among the Jews for the sealing and anointing of a new king or priest.

The Hebrew word "mashiyach," which is translated Messiah, and the Greek word "Christos," which is translated Christ, both mean "anointed." Some people have thought that Christ was Jesus' surname, but the word "Christ" was actually a title that means "the anointed one."

Selfishness of Judas

Scripture tells us that two people kissed Jesus. Judas kissed His face and then betrayed Him (Luke 22:48). In contrast, Mary kissed Jesus' feet (Luke 7:38) then served Him.

The genuine sacrifice and service of Mary was a stinging rebuke to the selfishness of Judas (John 12:3-6). It was immediately after his pious statement

of concern for the poor that Judas went out and agreed to betray the Savior for the price of a slave.

Judas, pretending to be indignant, protested under his breath—just loud enough for those seated nearby to hear.

“What a tragic waste of resources!” he exclaimed. “Why, this oil could have been sold for more than three hundred denari.” Then, as an afterthought to cloak his own greedy designs, Judas added: “Of course, the proceeds could have been donated to the poor!”

Some of the other disciples nodded in agreement. What Judas’ peers didn’t know was that his selfish heart had felt keenly rebuked by Mary’s liberal generosity.

It is often true that those who look down their noses at “sinners” are, like Judas, doing this as a diversionary tactic lest someone should discover their own sin. The most critical and judgmental people in the church are usually the ones who are struggling with hidden guilt.

A Public Display

Mary was not ashamed to make a spectacle of herself in showing her love for Jesus. Too often we are afraid to show our love for Jesus publicly in the workplace or the neighborhood for fear of being ridiculed for our faith.

I have observed people in a public restaurant who wait until they think no one is looking and then quickly bow their heads for three seconds to silently thank God for their food. Jesus warned, “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26, NKJV).

Because Mary was not afraid to openly demonstrate her loyalty and submission to Jesus, the Lord was likewise willing to defend her in public.

Jesus heard His faithful disciples echo Judas’ murmurings. With a sad compassion, He said to them: “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me, you do not have always. For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial.”

This clear statement of Jesus’ approval brought ecstatic joy to Mary’s heart. Knowing that the Lord was pleased with her was all she ever wanted. The weeping woman fell again to her knees and resumed kissing His feet.

Jesus was very protective of Mary because He understood her heart. Throughout Scripture a woman is a symbol of the church, and flawed and defective though she may appear, Jesus is grieved and angered by those who, like Judas, stand by and accuse the bride of Christ.

Love Gives Lavishly

I know a fairly prosperous businessman whose son was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison. The loving father, convinced that his son was innocent, mortgaged his home and sold all of the family’s assets in order to pay the legal fees to get his son another trial.

Even though the conviction stood, the father never regretted the sacrifice. Why did he do it? Love gives sacrificially. The ultimate illustration of such love is described in John 3:16. God the Father gave His all when He sent His only beloved Son.

When Naaman the Syrian was healed of leprosy, his first desire was to give something to Elisha the prophet (2 Kings chapter 5). His lavish offering was in proportion to his great gratitude. Likewise, after Zacchaeus was forgiven by Christ, his next response was to give abundantly to others (Luke 19:1-10).

Mary too felt compelled to give to Jesus because she appreciated how much she had been forgiven.

Jesus looked at the woman, then back at Simon. “Do you see this woman?” He asked. “I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.

“You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.

“Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”

When we begin to see how much Jesus suffered and paid for our sins, when we are genuinely converted from our selfish striving for recognition and grasping for earthly gain, then and only then will we be content to humbly serve and to give all to the One who gave all for us. 

**Throughout this article, paragraphs in italic type indicate selections from the “Story” section in chapter 4 of the book At Jesus’ Feet: The Gospel According to Mary Magdalene.*

At Jesus’ Feet: The Gospel According to Mary Magdalene

This article was condensed from chapter 4 of this beautiful new book by Doug Batchelor.

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