

MAGDALENA TODAY

... *making a difference*

Have You Been Benched?

By Darla France



When a dear friend of mine was a little girl, she attended a very strict church. They had many rules about keeping the rules. Members of the church had to be especially good rule keepers. Sometimes adult members who broke the rules even had to sit outside on a wooden bench while waiting for the non-rule-breaking members to decide on appropriate punishments. The bench was a physical and emotional place of exile.

My friend remembers watching these poor “rule breakers” sit and wait with fear on their faces or tears of shame falling from their eyes until they were called into the congregation. They had to wait on the “outside” while they and their “bad” rule-breaking behaviors were discussed “inside” the church. She believed a rule breaker was not only separated from the good members, but from God Himself. The thoughts that formed around that memory told her a lie—if she failed, anywhere, at any time, she was benched—exiled from the Lord’s love. Repeatedly that belief would drag her emotionally to that wooden bench to sit alone in fear and shame just like the people she had witnessed—secluded and waiting for God to pass His critical eye over her until He voted her back inside His love.

Are you benched? Have your thoughts been telling you that you cannot get off the exiled bench and play or enjoy the freedom of ministry because you have been a rule breaker? Have you believed what others make you feel?

In the film *Magdalena: Through Her Eyes*, Jesus encounters women who believe they are in that kind of emotional exile. I am so thankful that their intense pain led them to Jesus. His healing love and joy was the powerful catalyst that helped them recover and restore to a place of intended joy.

We all need a powerful catalyst to move us from our respective, unique places on the bench. How do we stand up and come back to the place of dignity that Jesus gave the women in the film?

Ask the Lord to help you lose your “adult self-consciousness.” This does not mean that we stop being wise or start acting childishly, but that our original joy-like freedom is restored. Have you ever noticed how self-conscious we become when someone has made us feel benched? We must switch our focus to the voice of Jesus at work within us. He sits next to us and gently whispers that His emphasis has a lot more to do with being than doing. *(continued on next page)*

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Ask the Lord to help you regain the courage to be yourself again. When we greet the Lord at physical death, I don't believe He will ask us, "Why weren't you Billy Graham?" or _____, you fill in the blank. Instead, He may ask us, "Why weren't you...well, **YOU?**" The authentic disciple of Jesus is not a cookie-cutter person. Ask God for the courage to be your own memorable and distinct character for the kingdom.

Get off the bench. As Jesus came to the women in the film and told them to "go...", He is looking into your eyes and telling you the same truth. He is the One who gives you your identity. Sometimes our lives feel like messy, long departures from where those who make the rules say we should be. If you are caught up in the authority of credentials, human valuation, or bondage of "the way we have always done it," please get up off the bench. The very action of standing to your feet emotionally will defuse those who want to bench you. Then you will remember, "**Ah yes...my value is in my position, not my performance.**"

Darla France is the Executive Director of Life Touch Ministries, www.lifetouchmin.org, and creator of "When the Pain Is Too Deep, Returning to Joy" workshops.

In her workshop, Darla uses clips from *Magdalena: Through Her Eyes* to encourage women personally and equip them to help others who might be stuck in emotional pain. Watch a conference overview at www.lifetouchmin.org/events.

The Healing Journey



Darla was so practical in her workshop as she shared ways to deal with negative emotions. Once home, I told my three teenage boys the principle of putting your negative emotions in buckets and then pouring them out at the feet of Jesus. I told them to think of one thing that they were concerned or worried about and then mentally put it in a pail. Then they were to take the pail and mentally pour it out at the feet of Jesus and let Him take care of it. Two of the boys immediately tried it, but our third son said that it's harder to do for some people than others. As he sat quietly on the couch the next morning, I asked him what he was doing, and he said, "Dumping my buckets and filling my joy bucket!"

Jeannie, participant in "When the Pain Is Too Deep, Returning to Joy" workshop, Orlando, FL



This Christmas—Share the Journey

This time of year might be a great time to plan a “Movie Night With a Purpose,” which will motivate everyone to look at their own journeys and in turn share the film’s message with their family, friends and neighbors.

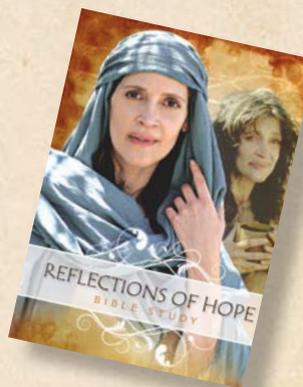
The night may include:

- ❖ *Free*, a short video for the modern woman.
- ❖ *Magdalena: Through Her Eyes*, (60-minute version).
- ❖ Connection through small group discussion
- ❖ Making a difference, choosing a response:
 - *Magdalena* follow-up Bible study.
 - Host another showing.
 - Donating to a women’s cause.

Everything you need for hosting a great movie night is available at www.MagdalenaToday.com.



The Journey



The smell of freshly popped popcorn welcomed the women as they arrived. Our movie night with a purpose was followed by a clear gospel presentation and an invitation to join the follow-up Bible study, “Reflections of Hope.” Even though our goal was primarily to reach those outside the church, the women who signed up to do the study were our members. I led the study in my home with women of diverse ages, backgrounds and spiritual maturity. Through our time together, I became more aware that regardless of our age or stage of life, we all struggle with areas in which we need encouragement or in which we need to experience freedom. This study was exactly what I needed and others were equally blessed!

Nancy
Kansas City, MO

Journey with your friends today, and the women of our past, to discover hope for your future. Each woman Jesus interacted with had a struggle that women may still have today. *Reflections of Hope* contains eight thought-provoking lessons to help you experience God’s love and power in your situation.

MAGDALENA *in Action*



For years I talked with my mother about Christ, but she always seemed reluctant to receive His salvation. After watching *Magdalena* together, we cried and talked about the Lord and His love. I shared how Jesus changed my life, what He means to me, as well as how much He loves her. After a few questions she wanted to ask the Lord into her heart. It was such a tender and loving moment. How honored and blessed I felt to experience this precious time with my mother.

About two weeks later Mom was admitted to a hospital for severe stomach pain. During her stay she had three seizures and two new mini-strokes. This unfortunate turn of events caused her to regress mentally and physically. Even though this setback is heartbreaking, I rejoice in knowing that she knows the Lord as her personal Savior, that we will be together in Heaven, and that God's timing is ALWAYS perfect.

*Anonymous
Orlando, FL*



A Movie Night With a Purpose

Village Baptist Church
Oklahoma City

Results:

- 300 attended *Magdalena: Through Her Eyes* movie night.
- Small-group sharing was so rich that the women did not want to stop.
- Ideas were flowing about ways to reach out with *Magdalena* in different settings.
- Many lined up afterward to buy the DVD to share with others and to participate in the follow-up Bible study.



Do people you know need a fresh perspective on God's love?

Discover the impact *Magdalena: Through Her Eyes* could make in your life or your ministry. Audiences all over the world are deeply touched by Jesus' intensely personal interactions of healing and forgiveness. In *Magdalena*, Mary Magdalene narrates the true story of Jesus from her unique perspective as a woman. As she follows Jesus and tells the stories of the woman at the well and others, she reminds viewers of His compassion for women and men alike. People feel God's love deeply while watching the movie and have a new sense of personal worth.

We invite you to host a movie night with a purpose in your city, church or home, and then to dig deeper into God's word through the companion Bible study, *Reflections of Hope*.

"Nobody can tell a love story like a woman who's experienced it firsthand. That's what Mary Magdalene is doing in this moving and compelling DVD. As she tells the story of Jesus, you are right there in the experiences, holding your breath, following the plot and anticipating a great end. This is life-changing and life enhancing."



Thelma Wells
President, Woman of God Ministries



"Though the movie portrays Jesus' care for women so long ago, the same issues and timeless principles resonate with women today."

Marcia, PA



"He knows the needs of our heart, whether we are healthy and whole, or sick and diseased of body, heart or soul."

Anonymous, FL

To learn more about the movie and resources, visit www.MagdalenaToday.com. Email us at info@MagdalenaToday.com and include the code, 2010-Issue 2, to receive a FREE kit containing the DVD, Bible study and sample resources.