

# Magdala

by Valerie Gross

## Suggested Questions for Book groups

1. What is the “love story that has no end”? Why doesn’t it end?
2. What does Mary learn from Jesus in the course of “Magdala”? What does she learn from writing down their story? Are these lessons the same or different?
3. What does Jesus learn from Mary in the course of the story? What might have become of Jesus if they hadn’t met, or if Mary had been a more traditional wife?
4. What role does the Roman occupation play in the story? How does it galvanize the events?
5. How does the character of Judas shape the events of Mary’s and Jesus’ lives? Is he a redeemable person? Do we love him or do we hate him by the end of the story?
6. What do you think Jesus said to the tax man?
7. What can learn from the character of Elizabeth? Do you think she rejoins the group, after the events in Jerusalem? What do you think happens to her?
8. What does it mean to you that Mary Magdalene is portrayed as a healer? What does it mean to you that she is the first to cross the line to “love thine enemy as thyself”?
9. Consider the character of Hannah. Was her death necessary for Mary Magdalene’s realization in the forest, or would Mary have come to the same conclusion even if Hannah had lived?
10. What would it take for you to make peace with your worst enemy? Do you think forgiveness is a grace, like a rainbow, something that just happens, or do you think it is something we can work on?
11. What would it be like to sit with the women on Magdala on the new moon? How would that feel? Do we have any experience similar to that in our lives? Is there anyway we can create that experience for ourselves in our contemporary lives?

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12. Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “I hate war as only a soldier who has lived it can, only as one who has seen its brutality, its futility, its stupidity.” Do you think all soldiers eventually tire of war, or are there some who find war to be a valuable experience?
13. On the other hand, do you think Jesus could have come to embrace peace so fully if he had not been a soldier, or if he had not lived since childhood in a war torn land?
14. One theme in Magdala is the relationship between physical healing and spiritual healing – what does that mean to you? Do you know anyone who was spiritually healed because of an illness? Can we be physically sick and spiritually well, or vice versa? Why?
15. How do you feel about Maryanna? Was she a good enough mother? What do you think about the way she brought Jesus into the world?
16. Do you find yourself thinking differently about the religious stories with which you were raised after reading “Magdala”? Does this version of the events support or contradict what you’ve always believed?
17. In this story we get a glimpse of what it’s like to grow up with the future of the world on your shoulders. Is this unique to royalty, or does this have some application in all our lives? Does Mary ultimately come to peace with her responsibilities? If so, how? If not, why?