

THE DA VINCI CODE AND THE ORIGINAL TEXTS
Discussing Mary Magdalene on the basis of the original Gospel texts
Mailis Janatuinen

Foreword

Dan Brown's book *The Da Vinci Code* and the film based on it have been a huge success and they have affected and modified many people's idea of Jesus Christ. According to the book, Jesus and Mary Magdalene had an affair from which a child was born. Brown's claim is based on the so called Gospel of Philip, written 150-200 years later than the gospels of The New Testament. It is not explicitly stated in The Gospel of Philip that Jesus and Mary Magdalene would have had an affair; the text merely calls Mary a *koinoonos* of Jesus. The word has a wide range of meanings: a spouse, a friend in faith, a business partner. In fact, The Gospel of Philip uses the word "shimee" when talking about someone's wife. It is therefore unlikely that the writer of The Gospel of Philip would have considered Mary to be Jesus' wife. Dan Brown has simply interpreted the word "koinoonos" in a way that best suited the plot of his book.

But what do the original texts say? The four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote down the events of Jesus' life some 30-50 years after His death. At that time many eyewitnesses were still alive who could have either confirmed or contradicted the Gospel accounts. Philip, who wrote his narrative a century or two later can hardly be called a reliable witness, let alone Leonardo da Vinci, who lived 1400 years later than the Evangelists who wrote the original Gospel accounts.

Now let's imagine that you were to find out what kind of affairs Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) had with women. You'd have access to a biographical novel about the love life of this great general written in 2005 and the memoirs of a close friend of his from the 1850s which gives a contemporary account of the matter. Which book would you trust more? The difference in time is as big as between the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and The Gospel of Philip.

This guide is meant for those who have read *The Da Vinci Code* or seen the film and want to determine how accurate and true the statements presented in them are. I have dealt with all those parts in The New Testament in which Mary Magdalene is mentioned. Because more than one Gospel text will be used in the same discussion, I recommend that the section titled "**The texts**" be printed or photocopied and given to all participants. When discussing other points in this guide, follow the regular Glad Tidings procedure, which is explained on this internet site. The questions within brackets are auxiliary questions meant to be presented if the main question elicits no answers.

"We love because he first loved us" (1.John 4:19)

Espoo, autumn 2006

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THE TEXTS (to be printed and photocopied)

1. MARY MEETS JESUS

Text 1: Luke 8:1-3 ¹After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: **Mary (called Magdalene)** from whom seven demons had come out; ³Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Text 2: Matthew 12: 14; 15:1-2; 16:1

12: ¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.
15: ¹Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ²"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"
16: ¹The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.

2. THE SUN WAS DARKENED

Text 1: Luke 23:32-34

³²Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Text 2: Matthew 27:45-56 ⁴⁵From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." ⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." ⁵⁰And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

⁵¹At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. ⁵²The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. ⁵⁴When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!" ⁵⁵Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. ⁵⁶Among them were **Mary Magdalene**, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

3. THE BURIAL OF JESUS

Text 1: John 19:38-42; Matthew 27: 57-61

John 19:38-42 ³⁸Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. ³⁹He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. ⁴⁰Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. ⁴¹At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new

tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. ⁴²Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Matthew 27: 57-61 ⁵⁷As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹**Mary Magdalene** and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

Text 2: Mark 15:47 ja Luke 23: 54-56

Mark 15:47 ⁴⁷Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.

Luke 23: 54-56 ⁵⁴It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. ⁵⁵The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.

⁵⁶Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

4. AT THE EMPTY TOMB

Text 1: Luke 24:1 ¹On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.

Text 2: Matthew 28:1-4 ¹After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, **Mary Magdalene** and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ²There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

Text 3: John 20:1-10 ¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, **Mary Magdalene** went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" ³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰Then the disciples went back to their homes,...

5. MARY MEETS THE RESURRECTED LORD

Text: John 20:11-18 ¹¹but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸**Mary Magdalene** went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

THE QUESTIONS

1. MARY MEETS JESUS Luke 8:1-3

Text 1: Luke 8:1-3 ¹After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: **Mary (called Magdalene)** from whom seven demons had come out; ³Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Background information: Being possessed means that evil spirits abide within a person and they express themselves by shouting and raging. This must not be mixed with mental illnesses; it is more closely related to the phenomena that appear in connection with the worshipping of Satan. It is impossible for a possessed person to lead a normal life. The town of Magdala was situated by lake Gennesaret, and fishing and dove raising were its major sources of livelihood. Because Mary had means of her own, it has been suggested that she may have kept doves. The Gospels know four different Marys, and Mary Magdalene is not to be mixed up with the prostitute who anointed Jesus' feet, nor with Mary of Bethany, who anointed Jesus' feet before his death. None of the Gospels portray Mary Magdalene as a prostitute.

Seven evil spirits

- Luke mentions that Mary had been possessed by seven evil spirits. Why was this particular piece of information worth mentioning?
- What do you think Mary's life was like while she was possessed by seven evil spirits. (How did it affect her life if she was married? What about if she was not married?)
- What kind of things bind the people of our times in the same way as the evil spirits bound Mary?
- What things in Mary's life changed the moment Jesus cast the seven demons out of her?
- When a woman is mentioned in the Bible, the names of her husband or sons are usually also given. What can we conclude from the fact that there is no mention of either in connection with Mary Magdalene?
- Think about possible reasons why Mary didn't marry any of the fishermen of Magdala after she was liberated from the evil spirits?

Jesus accepts women in his company

- In Jesus' days, the rabbis never taught women or accepted them in their company. Why did Jesus choose to act against the conventions of his time in this matter?
- Think about the motives and feelings of the women who decided to follow Jesus around the country?
- What kind of things may have persuaded Cuza to let his wife go and follow Jesus?
- Think about the relationships between the women who followed Jesus.
- The Bible says: "*These women were helping to support them out of their own means.*" What did this mean in practice?
- What kind of things did Mary learn and experience during the three years that she followed Jesus? (The answer is to be found outside this text)
- Mary is mentioned once in this passage but the next mention of her is much later, in the account of Jesus' death. What does this tell us about Mary?
- Mary's name is mentioned 19 times in the Gospels. Nine out of these nineteen occurrences appear in lists of women's names, and in eight of these lists Mary's name is mentioned first. What can we conclude from this?

Questions related to *The Da Vinci Code*:

- If Jesus and Mary Magdalene had been married, why was there be no mention of it in contemporary documents? Why would it be concealed?
- Extramarital affairs were strictly prohibited in the Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments, which also bound Jesus. If he had had this kind of affair, how would it have affected his followers?
- Compare the portrayal of Mary in *The Da Vinci Code* to how she is described in this Gospel account.
- What are the most impressive things in the picture the text gives us of Jesus?

Text 2: Matthew 12: 14; 15:1-2; 16:1

12: ¹⁴*But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus.*

15: ¹*Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ²"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"*

16: ¹*The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.*

- Why did Jesus have so many enemies who wanted to do him harm?
- In what ways did his enemies try to damage his good reputation?
- There is not a single contemporary document testifying that Jesus' enemies would have accused him of leading an immoral life. (Had the alleged affair in *The Da Vinci Code* been true, how would Jesus' enemies have made use of it?)

2. THE SUN WAS DARKENED

Text 1: Luke 23:32-34

³²*Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

- Compare the way Jesus suffered to the way suffering is depicted in action movies (also in *The Da Vinci Code*)
- What do you think Jesus would have said to Silas in *The Da Vinci Code*, who tried to promote his cause by murdering people?

Text 2: Matthew 27:45-56 ⁴⁵*From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"—which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." ⁴⁸Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." ⁵⁰And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.*

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earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"⁵⁵ Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs.⁵⁶ Among them were **Mary Magdalene**, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Background information: The darkness at Jesus' death couldn't have been a solar eclipse; the Jewish Easter is at full moon when the sun's disc cannot be covered by the moon.

When Jesus died, Mary had been her follower for about three years.

The women on Golgotha, verses 55-56

- Do you think Mary had anticipated Jesus' fate or whether it came as a total shock to her?
- Why did the Galilean women watch Jesus die from a distance instead of going close to him?
- The Gospel of John says that Mary mother of Jesus was standing at the foot of the cross. Why would she stand there and not further away with the other women?
- Think about reasons why Jesus' male followers - apart from John - didn't come to watch their master die.
- How do men react when someone close to them is suffering and there's nothing they can do about it? What about women?

Mary sees Jesus die, verses 45-50

- What, if anything, was Mary disappointed at on Good Friday?
- Look at verses 45-49 through Mary's eyes. What do you think caused her most pain in that situation?
- Mary had herself felt that God had forsaken her when she was possessed by evil spirits. How did she feel when she heard Jesus cry out in verse 46?
- Speaking was very difficult for someone hanging on the cross for his lungs would be pressed. Think about what made Jesus cry out in a loud voice when he died. (If he cried out of fear, what was he afraid of?)
- What shows that Mary's love for Jesus didn't die when Jesus died?

The testimony of the Roman officer, verses 51-54

- What things indicate that this was not a death of an ordinary human being?
- What made the gruff professional soldiers so scared? What were they afraid of? (54)?
- What was so special about Jesus' suffering and death that it elicited the recognition expressed by the Roman officer in verse 54?
- Do you think Mary believed that day that Jesus was the Son of God? Give reasons to your answers.
- What might you have thought about Jesus' death if you had been standing at the foot of the cross?
- If you were told that Jesus suffered the torture and death to give you eternal life, what would you think of such a statement?

Questions related to *The Da Vinci Code*:

- Compare the Mary in *The Da Vinci Code* to the Mary in this Gospel text.
- What are the most impressive things in the picture the text gives us of Jesus?
- In his novel, Dan Brown portrays Jesus as a mere human being. What does this Gospel text say about the matter?

3. THE BURIAL OF JESUS

Text 1: John 19:38-42; Matthew 27: 57-61

John 19:38-42 ³⁸Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. ³⁹He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. ⁴⁰Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. ⁴¹At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. ⁴²Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

Matthew 27: 57-61 ⁵⁷As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. ⁵⁹Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. ⁶¹**Mary Magdalene** and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb.

Background information: It was important that Jesus be buried immediately; it had to be done within three hours after his death, between 3 and 6 pm. The reason for this haste was the Great Sabbath, which began when the first evening star appeared in the sky, and by that time everyone was to be in their homes. Usually, the bodies of criminals were left to rot on the crosses until they dropped down, but since it was the time of the Passover Feast the inhabitants of Jerusalem were spared the ugly sight and nasty smell of the crucified bodies. Joseph of Arimathea went to see Pilate and the Sanhedrist Nicodemus went to get what was needed for the burial. Then Jesus' abused body was removed from the cross and taken to the tomb. None of Jesus' disciples were present when he was buried with the exception of Mary Magdalene – the only one of Jesus' original followers.

- Compare the burial of someone close to you to the burial of Jesus.
- Why weren't Jesus' disciples there when their Lord and master was buried?
- Joseph and Nicodemus had been secret disciples of Jesus. What does their behaviour indicate in this situation?
- What would possibly have happened to Jesus' body if Joseph and Nicodemus hadn't decided to take action?
- Think about reasons why Jesus' mother and the other Galilean women didn't come to the tomb but returned to their homes. (They didn't live in Jerusalem but were there for the Feast of the Passover)
- Think about how Jesus' body was taken down from the cross.
- What were the large linen cloth and seventy-five pounds (about 30 kg) of ointment needed for?
- Why does Matthew especially mention that the tomb was new and empty?
- What do you think was missing from this burial? (What might it have been like, had there been more time?)

Mary at the tomb, verse 61

Background information: Mary Magdalene came from the country and wasn't too familiar with Jerusalem, nor did she move in the same circles with Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea. "The other Mary" is the mother of Jacob the younger and of Joseph, and the wife of Clopas. She, too, had been standing on Golgotha the whole long Friday afternoon. (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40, John 19:25).

- Imagine what Mary's mental and physical state was like that afternoon when she was following the funeral procession to the family tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. What kind of feelings do you think were running through her?

- Why didn't Mary do anything at Jesus' burial but just sat on a stone and watched?
- Do you think Mary was in a state of shock? Give reasons to your answers.

Text 2: Mark 15:47 ja Luke 23: 54-56

Mark 15:47 ⁴⁷*Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.*

Luke 23: 54-56 ⁵⁴*It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.* ⁵⁵*The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.*

⁵⁶*Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.*

- What does this text tell us about the two Marys?
- What may have refrained the Marys from acting hysterically at the burial?
- Why did the Marys rush to buy herbs and ointment at the last minute? Couldn't it have been done later?
- What was the Sabbath like that Jesus spent in the tomb? Think about this from Mary's point of view.

Questions related to *The Da Vinci Code*:

- Apart from Mary Magdalene, the other Mary is also mentioned in the text. What does this indicate?
- If Dan Brown's suggestion that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had an affair was true, how would the other Mary have acted in this situation?

(NB! This section has the fewest questions whereas the next one has the most. If there is time left, you can proceed to the first questions in section 4, 'At the empty tomb')

4. AT THE EMPTY TOMB

Text 1: Luke 24:1 ¹*On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.*

Background information: Jesus' body had already been anointed once on Friday and the tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers. Combining the information in the Gospel accounts, we can conclude that the women who went to the tomb were Mary Magdalene, "the other Mary", Salome, the mother of James and John, sons of Zebedee, and Joanna. All of the women except Mary Magdalene were wives and mothers (the other Mary and Salome were even mothers of disciples). All four women were from Galilee.

- Why did the women go to Jesus' tomb on Sunday morning although they knew they couldn't possibly get in; the tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers and the entrance blocked by a stone.
- Why were the women already on the move before sunrise?
- Why did Jesus' male disciples not go to the tomb together with the women?
- How do you think the disciples spent the Friday night and Saturday morning after Jesus had died?

Text 2: Matthew 28:1-4 ¹*After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.* ²*There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.* ³*His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.* ⁴*The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.*

- Why didn't God let anyone see the resurrection of Jesus? Why did it take place unseen by anyone?
- If the women had believed Jesus' prophecies about his resurrection, how would they have acted at the tomb on Easter morning?
- The women had already seen Jesus' abused body and how it was anointed on Friday evening. Why would they want to anoint it one more time on Sunday morning?
- Do you think you would like to see and touch the body of a beloved person in a similar situation?
- Why did the men (the disciples) not want to touch Jesus' body? Would men and women react differently in this kind of situation?
- Mary's name appears first in all the lists of names that are given in the accounts of Easter morning. Why is this so?

Text 3: John 20:1-10 ¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, **Mary Magdalene** went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. ²So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" ³So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. ⁴Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, ⁷as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. ⁸Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. ⁹(They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) ¹⁰Then the disciples went back to their homes,...

Background information: By comparing the Gospel accounts we can conclude that the women started for the tomb together but that Mary Magdalene reached it first (apparently she was the youngest of the them). She rushed to the disciples before the rest of the women came to the tomb. It had probably crossed their minds that Jesus' enemies might have stolen his body. In Jewish culture, desecration of a dead body was a punishment worse than death. "The other disciple, the one Jesus loved" is John himself, the writer of the Gospel.

- Imagine what Mary must have thought and felt when she saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.
- Why did she go away without looking inside the tomb?
- Why did Mary still not realize that Jesus had risen from the dead?
- What does verse 2 tell us about the relationship between Mary and the disciples?
- Verse 2 contains Mary's first utterance in the Bible. What does it reveal about her? (What kind of person was she? What were her feelings when she said it?)
- Who does Mary mean by "we" in verse 2?

The shroud, verses 3-9

- The shroud was a large piece of linen wrapped around the body with 75 pounds (about 30 kg) of ointment in the folds. There was a separate cloth for the head. Imagine what the shroud would have looked like if someone had stolen the body from within it.
- What was it about the shroud that made John believe?
- What was it that John believed (verse 8) when he saw the shroud? What still remained unclear?
- Why is the shroud valid evidence of Jesus' bodily resurrection?

The resurrection of the body

- What is the difference between the resurrection of the body, which Christians believe in, and the immortality of the soul, which many other religions too believe in?
- If there was no resurrection of the body, what would Christianity have to give to humankind?
- Picture a person who believes in every other tenet of Christianity except the resurrection of the body. Can such a person be called a Christian?

Questions related to *The Da Vinci Code*:

- In the light of these texts, what do you think of Dan Brown's claim that Jesus was declared to be God by a decree of a Council some 300 years after the events?
- Which source do you find more plausible: the Gospel texts or the basic idea of Dan Brown's novel?

5. MARY MEETS THE RESURRECTED LORD

Text: John 20:11-18 ¹¹but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus. ¹⁵"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸**Mary Magdalene** went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

Background information: The word "Rabboni" shows deeper respect and reverence than the word rabbi (teacher), and it was also used of God. Mary Magdalene must herself have told about this incident to John, who included it in his account of Jesus' life. John was the last one to write his Gospel, some 50 years after these events. He wanted to include such events in his Gospel that the other evangelists had not told about.

The angels, verses 11-13

- Why did Mary Magdalene return to the tomb although she knew it was empty? (11)
- If Mary and the disciples had their lodgings about one kilometre away from the tomb, how much time and energy had it taken so far for Mary to find Jesus? (also see John 20:1-2)
- There is no mention of Mary crying at the cross or the burial. If we assume that this is the first occasion when she burst into tears, what may have caused it?
- Were her tears useless? Give reasons to your answers.
- Think about what kind of relationship Mary had with Jesus considering the names she used of him. (13,16,18).
- Why didn't Mary appear to be surprised or ask the angels what they were doing in the tomb?
- Why did the angels ask Mary a self-evident question?

Mary and Jesus, verses 14-17

- Why didn't Jesus reveal to Mary straight away who he really was?
- Why didn't Mary recognize Jesus as soon as she saw him?
- Why did Jesus, too, ask Mary why she was crying when he must have known the answer?
- How did Mary think she would be able to take Jesus' body away from the tomb and where was she planning to take it (15)?
- Why did Mary finally recognize Jesus the moment he called her by name?
- What did Mary feel in her heart when she realized that Jesus was alive?
- Do you think Mary would have wanted to throw her arms around Jesus at that moment? Give reasons to your answers.
- Why did Jesus tell Mary not to touch him? Note that some time later he encouraged Thomas to touch him (verses 17 and 27).
- What does Jesus mean when he says "*for I have not yet returned to the Father*"(17) (When would Mary be allowed to touch Jesus?)
- What can men learn from Jesus' behaviour *as a man* in this situation?

Being a witness verses 17-18

- What does Jesus in fact claim about himself in verse 17?
- At that time women were not allowed to be witnesses in legal proceedings. Why did Jesus call women to be witnesses on Easter morning?
- Why did Jesus send Mary to tell the disciples the news though he knew they wouldn't believe her?
- Jesus refused to follow such rules of his community that he considered unjust. He cured sick people on the Sabbath and was seen in the company of tax collectors and prostitutes regardless of the criticism he received. Why didn't he choose Mary to replace Judas as his 12th disciple?
- Mary told the disciples what Jesus had said to her but apparently she kept silent about other details of their encounter until perhaps decades later she described to John what had happened (18). If this suggestion is true, think about reasons why Mary chose to keep quiet about the details of her encounter with Jesus.

Questions related to *The Da Vinci Code*:

- Compare the way Mary and Jesus are presented in this text to how they are portrayed in *The Da Vinci Code*.
- How does this text disprove the basic idea of the *The Da Vinci Code*.

Afterword: The resurrected Jesus appeared to his disciples many times over the next 40 days. Then he ascended into Heaven in front of 500 of his followers, Mary Magdalene probably among them. Acts 1:14 says: ¹⁴*They all joined together constantly in prayer, **along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.*** This passage gives us a last glimpse of Mary Magdalene.

- What do you think Mary's life was like after this? What kind of tasks was she perhaps given in the Christian congregation?
- Think about Mary's life cycle: her youth when she was possessed by evil spirits, three fabulous years in the company of Jesus and the rest of her life among the Christian congregation. How does this kind of life cycle appear to you?
- What do you think was the meaning of Mary's life?

The end