

A GLAD TIDINGS GUIDE FOR WOMEN'S MEETINGS

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1. JOSEPH AND MARY Matth.1:18-25

BACKGROUND: The leader may explain briefly **Luke 1:26-38**. According to Mosaic Law, **engagement was as binding as marriage**, and unfaithfulness during engagement was also punished by stoning. Sexual relations were not supposed to start before marriage (Deut.22).

NOTE: **A question in parenthesis should only be asked if no one answers the question preceding it.**

1. What shows us that Joseph suspected Mary of having deceived him (18-19)?
 - What do you think was most difficult for Joseph in that situation?
 - Do you think Mary had talked to Joseph about the visitation of an angel? If not, why not? If yes, then why didn't Joseph believe her?
2. Why didn't Joseph want to revenge the injustice and sue Mary and her family although, according to the law, he had the right to do it?
 - How do you think Joseph felt towards Mary in the situation described in verses 18-19?
3. Why didn't God send an angel to Joseph the very same day that he sent one to Mary (20)? (Why should Joseph's love have been tested in such a hard way?)
4. A virgin birth means that a sperm cell comes to Mary's womb from outside this universe. On what grounds could Joseph believe in virgin birth, although no such thing had ever happened in world history before (20-23)?
 - What features in our text prove to us that virgin birth is not a made-up story?
5. Why do you think the virgin birth is for many (theologians too) the most difficult doctrine to believe?
 - How does the belief in the virgin birth and our concept of God belong together?
6. Why wouldn't it have been possible for Jesus to save his people from their sins if he had been the son of Joseph and Mary?
 - Recall a sin that your conscience is accusing you for committing. Then read verse 21 again, putting your own name in the place of words "his people". Do you believe this verse is true when read in this way?
7. How could Joseph keep himself from touching his beloved Mary even when they were living under the same roof (25)?
8. Probably everybody thought that the child Mary was bearing was Joseph's. Do you think Joseph tried to free himself from false accusations in front of his and Mary's relatives?
 - Why did God choose none other than Joseph to be a foster father for his Son?

GLAD TIDINGS: Joseph probably died before Jesus started his public ministry, but he knew the main thing about his foster son: He would save his people – including his foster father - from their sins.

2. A WOMAN AT A WELL John 4:5-19

BACKGROUND: The Samaritans were people of mixed blood and was thus looked down on by the Jews. If this woman was in her early thirties at the time, it means that she had changed her partner just about every other year.

1. Why do you think this woman went to fetch water at noon and not at sunset as was customary for other women in Sychar? (How do you think this woman felt when going to the well alone every day?)
 - Whom could this woman keep company with?
 - What kinds of hopes and fears do you think she harbored for about the future?
2. Which is harder: to leave five lovers one after another, or to be left five times? Give your reasons.
 - What do you think it was like to start a new relationship for the sixth time, and this time with a married man?
 - How could she try to justify having stolen the father of some of the children of the village?
3. How do you think the woman felt about herself/ about men in general/ about love?
4. Jewish men avoided talking to women in public places and absolutely didn't do it one to one. Why was Jesus not afraid of critique and rumors?
 - Why did Jesus start the conversation by asking a favor from the woman (7)?
5. In what way did the woman misunderstand the words of Jesus in verse 10?
 - What was it that this woman was thirsting after?
 - What do you most thirst after in your own life? (You can answer this in your heart.)
6. Read the words in verse 14 as Jesus' words spoken to you personally. What do these words mean to you in your present circumstances?
 - What is the person like who has a well of living water in his/her heart?
7. Why does Jesus answer the request of the woman by saying: "Go, call your husband and come back" (15-16)?
 - What would have happened if Jesus had proclaimed verse 18 to the woman straight away without the exchange of words in verses 16 to 17?
 - Why does Jesus want to show us our sins before giving us living water?
8. How do you think this woman felt upon realizing that Jesus knew her whole life story?
 - How did the woman understand that instead of despising her, Jesus actually cared for her?
9. During the discussion that followed, Jesus revealed to the woman that he was the Messiah – a fact that he concealed from many others. Why do you think he did this (25-26)?
10. Look at verses 28 to 30. What practical consequences did it bring to the life of this woman that she had received living water from Jesus? (How did her attitude to her own sins change? What about her relationship with the village?)

GLAD TIDINGS: Jesus cried out on the cross: "I am thirsty!" (19:28). The owner of the well of living water had to experience excruciating thirst of body and soul. That is what he had to pay for the living water he is offering to us even today.

3. A PAGAN MOTHER Matth.15:21-28

BACKGROUND: **Canaanites** were old archenemies of Jews. **Tyre** and **Sidon** were situated at a distance of 45-60 km from Galilee. Jesus didn't want anyone to know about this journey abroad (Mark 7:24). The leader should tell the main facts about **King David** (22).

1. Imagine the everyday life of this mother, especially her relationships with other people. (Her daughter, husband, other children, neighbors etc.)

- What did the mother perhaps accuse herself of?
- Who in our day are the mothers who have as great a sorrow in her hearts as this woman did?

2. The Canaanite woman already knew something that most of the Jews were not aware of: namely that Jesus was the son of David (22). How do you think she had come to know this fact?

- Why did the mother ask mercy for herself (22)?

3. What were Jesus' first three reactions to the cry for help of this mother (23-26)?

- Usually Jesus welcomed all suffering people to himself. Why did he then give this woman a cold shoulder?
- What would you do if Jesus treated you in the same way as he treated this woman?

4. How did the disciples feel about the Canaanite woman and the whole situation (23)?

5. How did the Canaanite mother react to Jesus' seeming rejection (23,25,27)?

6. What do you think happened in the heart of Jesus while he was silent before the suffering mother?

- Why does Jesus sometimes hold his silence when we are crying him for help?
- Why must the faith of every one of us be tested?

7. Jesus praised the faith of only two people. Try to find as many characteristics of great faith in this woman as possible (28).

8. How is it generally thought that one gets great faith in one's heart?

- The leader should read Mark 7:30. How did this pagan mother get a great faith even before she had seen the miracle happen?
- In what kind of situations do we need great faith?

9. What was Jesus' purpose in his one and only journey abroad?

GLAD TIDINGS: On the cross Jesus had to believe in God in spite of his silence, cf. Psalm 22:1-2,24. The faith of Jesus was very much similar to that of the Canaanite woman at that point. The only big difference between their situations was that in the case of Jesus God was silent because of his anger, not because of his love.

4. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE Matth.19:1-12

1. DIVORCE 1-9

- Why were the Pharisees occupied with the question of divorce (3)?
- What do people in our time think about divorce?

- According to Jesus, what happens when two people get married (4-5a)?
- The leader should read Deut.24:1. What exactly did Moses command and what did he allow in this passage? Compare his words with the Pharisees' interpretation of them (7).
- According to Jesus, what are the arguments for a life-long marriage (4,5,6,8,9).
- Why do you think unfaithfulness is the one and only reason that Jesus would accept for divorce (9)?
- What will happen in a society where divorce becomes more and more common?

2. REMARRIAGE 9-10

- Compare verses 8-9 to Matt.5:32. What does Jesus teach about remarriage while the divorced spouse is still living? Stick to the text!
- The leader should read 1 Cor.7:10-11 and Rom.7:2-3. What does Paul teach about remarriage while the previous spouse is living?
- Why did the disciples react as they did to Jesus' teaching (10)?
- Why do you think the teaching of Jesus and Paul concerning remarriage is practically stifled to death even inside Christian churches of our day?

3. SINGLENES 11-12

- What does it mean that somebody is born as "an eunuch"?
- In what ways may other people make a person unable to marry?
- What does it mean in practice that somebody renounces marriage because of the kingdom of heaven?

4. SUMMARY

- Do you think that a person can lead a good life without sexual fulfillment? Give your reasons.
- What, according to Jesus, is more important for a Christian than attaining personal happiness?
- Whose good was Jesus concerned about when making such strict rules for our relationships with the other sex?
- What should a person, who has not fulfilled the commandments Jesus gives in this passage, do?
- What do you think will happen to a person's attitude to the Bible if he/she denies the validity of Jesus' teaching in this passage?

GLAD TIDINGS: The leader should read John 8:4-11

5. A WIFE WHO BETRAYED HER HUSBAND John 8:1-11

BACKGROUND: According to the law of Moses, both the man and the woman caught in adultery should have been stoned to death (Lev.20:10). The Romans, however, had assumed the right to preside over capital punishment in occupied Israel.

1. What makes a person commit adultery? Think of various reasons.
 - Imagine the life of this woman after she had found "a new love". What kind of happiness, what kind of pain did this relationship bring to her life?
2. What do you think could be the worst aspect of being caught right in the act of adultery?
 - How do you think the woman might have felt about her partner after he fled the scene?
 - What do you think was the hardest thing in this situation for the man, who was probably

also married?

3. There were many people involved in this incident. Think how the following people may have felt about the adultery and possible death penalty: the husband of the woman – her children – her parents (if they were still alive)? What about the wife of her lover, and his children?
 - How might this incident have affected the future of the children involved?
4. How did the woman possibly feel about Jesus when she was dragged before him (3-5)?
 - How do you think the woman felt about her adultery at that moment?
5. Why did the Jews drag the woman in front of Jesus even though they knew that the death penalty was something only the Romans presided over?
 - Why didn't Jesus simply answer: "None of you has the right to throw a stone at this woman", instead of what he actually said in verse 7?
6. Why do you think the accusers left the place in the order stated in verse 9?
 - Why didn't Jesus want to observe the effect his words had on his audience, choosing, instead, to bend down and write something on the ground?
7. Why did Jesus, and he alone, have the right to condemn this woman to death?
 - Why didn't Jesus act according to the Law of Moses in this case?
 - What happened to the punishment this woman should have suffered after having ruined the happiness of so many people?
8. Why do you think the woman didn't flee the scene while Jesus was writing on the ground for the second time and she had the chance to do it (8-9)?
 - When do you think the woman started to believe that her sins had been forgiven?
9. Why, do you suppose, Jesus wanted to say the words in verse 11 to this woman?
 - Jesus is also saying the words in verse 11 to you. What might they mean to you in your present circumstances?

GLAD TIDINGS: We are not told what Jesus wrote on the ground. Perhaps he acted like a judge and firstly wrote out the capital punishment that the law pronounced on adultery. And bending down for the second time, perhaps he may even have added these words: "I will suffer her punishment in her place."

6. A LONELY WOMAN Mark 5:25-34

BACKGROUND: According to the Mosaic Law a woman was considered religiously unclean during menstruation. Nobody was allowed to touch either her or a thing she had touched. Neither was she allowed to enter the temple in that state (Lev.15).

1. Supposing the woman of the text was around her thirties or forties, she had become ill while still quite young. What consequences would this illness have to her life if she were married? What if she weren't married?
 - What consequences did continual bleeding have to her physical state?
 - What effect does an illness like that have on one's self-image?
2. What do you think this woman thought about God after having conceived an illness like this in her young age?
 - How had her relationship with God possibly changed during the long years of illness?

3. In verse 26 it says that at one time this woman had some property. Think of different possibilities where she had the money from and for what use it was originally meant.
4. We can imagine that the gynecologists of the day were not very professional. Why was becoming well so important to this woman that she was willing to take such treatments and even use all her money for such “doctors”?
 - How do you think the woman felt about doctors and healers of all kind at this point of her life (26)?
 - What was the difference between Jesus and other healers?
5. How could this woman who was disappointed with other healers, be so sure that touching Jesus’ clothing would make her well (28)?
 - Are you as sure as this woman that Jesus could easily solve your worst problem?
6. Why didn’t this woman ask Jesus for help as other sick people did?
 - Why did the woman choose touching as the means of becoming well?
7. How could Jesus know that someone had gently touched his robe?
 - Why didn’t Jesus let the woman go home without talking to her?
8. How do you think the woman felt when she heard the question of Jesus in verse 30?
 - What did the woman see in the eyes of Jesus when he turned around and looked in her face (32)?
9. The woman didn’t intend to speak even one word to Jesus, and she ended up telling him the whole truth. What did she say (33)?
 - Have you ever told Jesus in so many words the whole truth about yourself? If not, why?
10. Verse 34 can be translated in two ways: “Your faith has healed you.” Or: “Your faith has saved you.” Why did Jesus want to say these particular words to this woman?
 - Why did Jesus call this woman his daughter although they probably were approximately the same age?

GLAD TIDINGS: Jesus, too, became ritually unclean when his blood flowed from the flogging and crucifixion. Everyone who touched him became unclean. This was the price Jesus had to pay for saving this woman - and for saving you!

7. JESUS AND CHILDREN Mark 10:13-16

BACKGROUND: At the time of Jesus, boys were made members of God’s nation when just eight days old. Yet children’s general position in society was rather low. The Greek word *pais* that is used for “child” in this passage can mean a child of any age, including babies.

1. When you look at your children or other children you know, is it easy or difficult for you to believe that the kingdom of God belongs to their like? Why or why not - give your reasons.
2. Think of various reasons why these mothers wanted to bring their children to Jesus - even small babies who were not able to understand what Jesus said.
 - If you yourself were to bring your child to Jesus, why would that be?

- Why didn't most of the mothers at that time, even as today, bring their children to Jesus?
3. Why didn't the disciples rejoice when children were brought to Jesus?
 - This is the only time when the gospels speak of Jesus as being "indignant". What in this situation made him feel like that?
 4. In our day, bringing our children to Jesus means bringing them into contact with the Bible. Why is it that even Christian parents often do not ensure that their children hear the Bible at home and in Sunday school, church camps, etc?
 - Think of concrete ways that you could take your child, grandchild, or other children around you to hear the words of Jesus?
 5. Why does a child enter into the kingdom of God more easily than an adult does?
 6. How does a child receive a present differently than an adult does?
 - How does a child accept the greatest present: the friendship of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins? What about an adult person?
 7. Imagine a kingdom that belongs to children only. How does it differ from the kingdoms of this world? (The care received, the duties to be done, etc.)
 - What does our text teach us about the kingdom of God?
 8. Jesus said in another occasion: "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.5:20). Here he promises that even the children can enter there. How can you explain this contradiction?
 9. The children that Jesus blessed that morning became adults in a couple of decades. Probably some of them became good, some of them not-so-good people. Some became happy, some others not so happy. Do you think the blessing they had received from Jesus had any lasting meaning for them? If so, what did it consist of?
 - What did the blessing of Jesus mean to these mothers later in life, when their children had to confront life's many difficulties?

GLAD TIDINGS: Perhaps the mothers of these children thought, "Jesus will never forget my child whom he once blessed." You can trust him in the same way when it comes to your own children.

8. THE WIDOW WHO LOST HER ONLY SON Luke 7:11-17

NOTE: People call Jesus a great prophet because they remember how both Elijah and Elisha of the Old Testament raised a widow's son from the dead (16).

1. Think of various reasons why so many people wanted to attend this funeral (12).
2. Think about this widow's life. She had only one child at a time when everyone wanted as many children as possible. What do you think were the highlights in the life of this small family while the father was still living?
 - What had probably been worst for this woman when her husband died?
3. What economical and psychological problems may arise when a mother is raising her only son

alone?

4. What was this mother possibly thinking about God while walking behind the coffin of her son?
5. At the time of the young man's death Jesus was in Capernaum, a town about 40 kilometers from Nain (7:1). The funeral was held not later than the following day. Why did Jesus want to reach this funeral in time, even though it meant he had to walk hurriedly such a long distance?
 - Why did Jesus want to help this widow who had never asked him for help?
6. In what situations have you felt that God's help couldn't possibly reach you in time?
 - How can we become convinced that the help of Jesus never comes too late?
7. Why did Jesus say to the crying mother: "Don't cry!"?
 - Jesus says today to you, too: "Don't cry!" What does he mean by that?
8. How did Jesus raise the young man from the dead?
9. What does Luke mean when he says: "Jesus gave the boy back to his mother" (15)?
 - How do you think this incident changed the relationship between the mother and her son?
10. The Heavenly Father, too, had to see his only Son being carried to his grave. Do you think his pain was greater or less than that of the widow?
 - In verse 16 it says: "God has come to help his people." Why didn't he help his own Son when he was dying?

9. A PROSTITUTE MEETS JESUS Luke 7:36-50

NOTE: In this culture, a woman was not supposed to show her hair in public. Verses 44-46 describe how honored guests were usually welcomed to a home.

1. What did the Pharisee Simon think about Jesus whom he had invited to his house (36, 39, 44-46)?
 - Why do you think Simon invited Jesus in the first place?
2. Everybody knew the woman because she was the prostitute of the town (37). Try to imagine the life of this woman when she was growing up - what had perhaps made her a prostitute? Think of various possibilities.
 - What kind of experiences did this woman have about being loved?
3. An alabaster jar full of perfume was quite expensive. Think of various reasons why this woman had saved the money and bought the jar?
4. Why did the woman want to meet Jesus so badly? She must have known that she would not get any warm welcome in the house of the Pharisee!
 - What made the woman believe that Jesus would not turn her down?
5. Why did this woman want to touch Jesus?
 - What happens if we are touched by somebody or something we detest?
 - What happened when the woman touched Jesus?

6. What made the woman cry so much that the feet of Jesus became wet?
7. What do you think came first in the case of this woman: her faith in Jesus or her love for him? Give your reasons from the text.
 - If you at one time have felt that that you love Jesus with all your heart what was the occasion?
8. In verses 41-42 Jesus tells a little parable about a moneylender. (Five hundred denarii amounts to the salary of 1,5 years. Fifty denarii amounts to the salary of 1,5 months.) Sin is here likened to debt. What did Jesus want to teach to Simon through this story?
 - What were the sins of Simon to which Jesus refers in his parable?
9. What happened to the sin-debt the woman owed to God?
 - What happened to the sin-debt Simon owed to God?
 - Why didn't Simon love Jesus?
10. Jesus, who is fully aware of all your sins, says to you now the words that are written in verses 48 and 50. What do you answer to him?

10. MARTHA AND MARY – WHO IS RIGHT? Luke 10:38-42

NOTE: The position of women was not the same in Jesus' time as it is now. Among other things, women could not study the Bible along with men.

1. What do you expect most from a visit to a good friend?
 - Jesus and his disciples had been out all day. What do you think they expected from their stay in the home of these sisters?
2. Think about the reactions of Martha and Mary to the visit of Jesus. Which is easier for you to understand and why?
3. We can see Martha's actual problem in verse 40. What was it?
 - What made Martha irritated over Jesus, not only over her sister?
 - In what situation did you want to say to Jesus: "Lord, don't you care...?"
4. What did Mary think about the evening meal?
 - Why would Jesus have rather had Martha also listen to his teaching?
5. Some Christians are more eager to serve Jesus than to hear his voice. Why?
 - What does it show about a relationship between two people if one of them is not interested in hearing what the other wants to say?
6. What did Jesus mean by "the one thing that is needed" (42)?
 - Do you agree that hearing the words of Jesus is the only thing you need in life and death?
7. Why would Jesus want you to hear his word regularly?
 - What will happen to us if we hear Jesus' words only occasionally?
 - Where and how can we hear the words of Jesus in our day?
8. When we choose to do something, it means that we choose to leave something else undone. What

concrete things do you have to leave undone in order to have time to read the Bible and go to Christian meetings?

9. Whom do you think Jesus loved better, Martha or Mary?

- Which of these verses do you think Jesus is saying to you personally today: verse 41 or 42?

10. The only thing needed in life and death is to hear the words of God. Why couldn't Jesus hear them when he was hanging on the cross?

11. A WOMAN WITH A HUNCHBACK Luke 13:10-17

NOTE: The synagogue was a place where people gathered on Saturdays to hear God's word. Women didn't have any say in religious matters at that time; they were sitting or standing on the balcony or in the back row. We don't know what was wrong with the back of this woman, but perhaps it was similar to being hunchbacked.

1. Imagine the everyday life of this woman during the 18 years of her disability.

- How do you think other people treated this woman with a hunchback (14)?

2. If you had become disabled in your teens, what do you think would have been the most difficult thing for you?

- If you had been disabled when still young, what would you have thought about God who allowed it to happen?

3. When Jesus dealt with demon possession he always addressed the demon directly. He does not do it here, which indicates that this woman was **not** possessed. What does Jesus mean when he says that it was Satan that bound her (16)?

- What kind of things can bind us people so that we can't live full lives?

4. The woman didn't come to the synagogue to get healed. What did she come for?

- What did it mean to this woman to hear God's word once a week?

5. Why didn't this woman ask Jesus for help? Think of various reasons.

- How do you think she felt when Jesus called her to come forward in front of all the people?
- What made her do what Jesus asked her to do?

6. According to this text, what helps people who are in one way or another bound by Satan? (Keep to the text!)

7. What does Jesus mean by calling this woman "a daughter of Abraham"? Think of various possibilities. (As for "Abraham", see note in study #28.)

8. How does the attitude of Jesus towards this woman differ from that of the synagogue ruler?

- The ruler of the synagogue thought he believed in God. What was lacking in his faith?
- What was binding the ruler of the synagogue?

GLAD TIDINGS: Satan would eventually bind Jesus himself - with nails to the cross. That is why he now can free from Satan's power all who want to become free.

12. A PERSISTENT WIDOW Luke 18:1-8

NOTE: The women in the time of Jesus neither could sue anybody nor be witnesses at court. Their male relatives had to handle such legal matters for them. This widow obviously didn't get any such help. Perhaps her male relatives even tried to take away the inheritance from her children.

1. Recall a time when you cried out for help from God day and night. Why is it easy to give up praying in such times (1 and 7)?
2. Imagine the life of this widow. Which hardships did she have to face while raising and nurturing her children all alone?
3. What makes some people similar to the judge in this parable: that they neither fear God nor care about men (2)?
 - Why did Jesus compare God with an unjust judge?
 - Have you ever felt as if God were an unjust judge? If you have, when?
4. The widow was convinced that the unjust judge would eventually help her. Why?
 - How could we become convinced of God's eventually helping our loved ones and us?
5. What happened in the heart of the widow while she was crying for help time after time?
 - What happens in our hearts while we are praying a long time in spite of God's silence?
6. What do the words of Jesus in verses 7-8 mean?
7. Jesus stood once before a judge. What were the similarities and the differences between these two situations - his and the widow's? (Don't look it up, discuss it from of your memory.)
 - How did the prayer of Jesus differ from the prayer of this woman (3)?
 - Why was the verdict of Jesus different from that of the widow?
 - Was God's verdict about Jesus just or unjust?
8. What does verse 8b have to do with the parable?
9. What does this parable teach to you personally about prayer (verses 1, 5, 7, 8)?

GLAD TIDINGS: When Pilate condemned Jesus to death he was an unjust judge. But when God at the same time condemned Jesus to die he was just, because our sins, yours and mine, were attributed to him at that moment.

13. THE WIDOW'S OFFERING Luke 21:1-4

NOTE: There are many promises for widows and orphans in the Old Testament, for example Psalms 10:14,17,18 and 68:5. Presumably the widow of our text had heard these promises. Offerings were used for the building of the temple, which was completed AD 63 and destroyed AD 70 - about forty years after these events.

1. Why do people give offerings in all religions?
 - Mark in his version of this story lets us know that the treasury was in a very visible place (Mark 12:41). What influence does it have on the giver if other people will eventually know how much he has given?

- What would this particular widow have thought had she known that Jesus was watching her carefully?
2. Jewish society of those days had neither a social security system, nor did it allow women to work outside home. Imagine that you had lost your husband and were trying to take care of your children in that situation. What would be the most difficult thing for you to handle?
 - If you were in a situation described above, for whom or for what cause could you give away your last penny?
 3. What makes a person give to God "all he has to live on" (4b)? Think of various possibilities.
 4. If God had forced the widow to give away the last of her money, what would she have thought about such a God?
 - How does the faith of these two people differ from each other: the one who offers to God while thankful for what he has got and the other who offers to God in order to get something from him?
 5. What was the faith of this widow like?
 - How had this widow become convinced that God would take care of her children?
 - Is it difficult for you to believe that God will take care of you and your children economically also?
 6. What had this widow received from God?
 - What have you got from God (compared to this widow)?
 7. Do you think that the children of this widow went to bed hungry that night? Give your reasons.
 - Which do you think is more harmful for your children/ grandchildren: that they must suffer privation or that they get everything they wish to have?
 8. What would God like to have you offer him or a suffering neighbour today? You can answer in your heart if you like.
 9. What did this widow leave to her children as an inheritance?
 - Compare the inheritance that the rich of this text left to their children and that the widow left.
 - What would you most like to leave to your children when you die?

GLAD TIDINGS: Our sins are likened to an astronomical sum of money in the Bible - ten thousand talents. Each one of us who cannot pay the debt is thrown into jail (i.e. hell). When Jesus wanted to buy us free from this enormous debt he had to give away "all he had to live on" - and his own precious blood at that.

14. MARY'S LAST GIFT Mark 14:1-9

BACKGROUND: The leader should tell briefly what the following passages teach us about **Mary of Bethany**: Luke 10:38-42, John 11 and John 12:1-11. (She is not the woman of Luke 7:36-50). The parents of Martha, Mary and Lazarus were obviously dead. Perhaps they had left some money to their unmarried daughters to be used for wedding or support in their old age. **The last week** of Jesus' life was just starting.

1. What kind of present would you give to your friend if you knew he/ she was dying?

- Jesus mentions here his own funeral (8)? Do you think Mary, unlike the disciples, realized he was going to die soon? Give your reasons.
2. To buy a jar of perfume made of nard you had to pay as much as an average worker earned in a whole year. That is why it was only used one drop at a time. How much would the jar be worth in our currency?
 - How long does it take to save such a sum?
 - As Mary bought this costly perfume, what might she have been thinking about her dowry or pension?
 3. Why did Mary pour all the contents of the jar on the head of Jesus, instead of only a few drops?
 - The words “Messiah” and “Christ” mean “the anointed one.” Jewish kings were usually anointed in the beginning of their career. Why was Jesus not anointed until just before his funeral?
 4. Mary had used all her savings for the jar of perfume. What part of the criticisms hurt her most (4-5)?
 - How could a year’s wages have benefited the poor of the town?
 5. What lifted Mary’s heart most in Jesus’ defense of her (6-9)?
 - Can you apply Jesus’ words to your own life: He/she did what she could (8)?
 - What could you do for Jesus from now on?
 6. What does Mary's deed have in common with Jesus' deed (i.e., his death on the cross, the “gospel” in verse 9)?
 - Which do you think is a bigger “waste”: that Mary poured the expensive perfume for Jesus' sake or that Jesus poured out his blood for Mary's sake?
 7. What in Mary's behavior is so unique that it will be remembered forever (9)?

M What kind of memory would you like to leave behind (9)?
 8. How do you think Mary felt later about the money she “wasted” on Jesus that day?

M How did Mary learn to love Jesus so much?

M How could we learn to love Jesus as Mary did?

GLAD TIDINGS: Mary had learned to love Jesus by listening to him. That is why she also was able to serve him at the right time. Mary had first believed in the gospel, and this faith aroused a desire in her heart to offer everything for the Lord. It was because of her that Jesus carried the scent of nard with him everywhere during his last days on the earth.

15. THE MOTHER OF JESUS UNDER THE CROSS John19:25-30

BACKGROUND: Crucifixion was perhaps the cruelest way ever invented for torturing a fellow human being. What made it painful for a crucified person to talk was that while inhaling he had to put his weight on the nails in his feet. While hanging on the cross Jesus was in fact in **hell**, because he had been forsaken by God. **The disciple whom Jesus loved** was in fact John himself (26).

1.Verses 25-27

- Why do you think it is that most of the friends of Jesus gathering under the cross were

women? (Do you think there is a difference between men and women when it comes to witnessing suffering that can no longer be relieved?)

- Why couldn't Mary, the mother of Jesus, keep away from the cross of her Son?
- What do you think was most difficult for Mary in this situation?
- Which do you think Mary was hoping to happen in this situation; that a miracle would happen, or that her Son would die as soon as possible? Give your reasons.
- When witnessing the humiliation of Jesus, did Mary still believe that he was the Son of God? Give your reasons.
- What did the last words of her Son mean to Mary? Imagine the situation where Jesus died without saying anything to his mother.
- Why did Jesus want to leave his mother in the care of John, and nobody else? (How would Mary's situation have been different if she had returned to her four remaining sons after Jesus' death; note that they didn't believe in him yet?)
- What do you think Jesus would like to point out about your relationship to your parents?

2. Verses 28-29

- Think of various reasons why crucified people became extremely thirsty.
- What else except water did Jesus thirst after on the cross?
- Jesus had once said in front of a crowd, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink" (7:37). Why did Jesus, the owner of Living Water, now have to succumb to thirst?

3. Verse 30

- The leader should read Matt.3:15 – Jesus' words immediately before his baptism. Compare them with verse 30.
- Do you believe that Jesus has fulfilled in your place all righteousness (i.e. all God's commandments)?
- What is the difference between these two expressions, "Jesus died" and, "Jesus gave up his spirit"?
- Compare the last hours of Jesus with the last ours of somebody you have seen die. (What was so unique in Jesus' behavior?)

GLAD TIDINGS: The parable of the rich man and Lazarus shows us that hell is a place where people are infinitely thirsty. The rich man asked Lazarus for a single drop of cool water on his tongue (Luke 16:24). Jesus suffered the thirst of hell so that you wouldn't have to suffer it forever and ever.

16. MARY MAGDALENE MEETS THE RISEN LORD John 20:11-18

BACKGROUND: The leader should read Luke 8:1-3, which tells us something about **the past of Mary Magdalene**. Mary, unlike the disciples, stood by the cross to the bitter end and even witnessed Jesus' burial (Matth.27:61). The word "**rabboni**" (16) has a stronger meaning than "**rabbi**" (teacher).

- What do you think Mary's life was like while she was possessed by seven evil spirits. (What was each day like, how were her personal relationships, what about the "fits" that the evil spirits caused...?)
- How do you think things were for Mary Magdalene during the years she traveled around the country with Jesus?
- What kind of love did Mary have for Jesus? Look at the terms she used about him

(13,16,18).

1. What does it show us about Mary that she stood by the cross until the bitter end, and even watched Jesus' burial?
 - How do you think Mary had spent those two nights and one day after Jesus had died?
2. Why didn't Mary want to leave the grave even though it was empty (11)?
 - Why was it so devastating for Mary that she couldn't see the body of Jesus and touch it any more?
3. Why didn't Mary seem to be surprised at all to see two angels in the grave? Think of various explanations (12-13).
4. Why didn't Mary recognize Jesus when seeing him and talking to him – think of various reasons (14).
 - Has it ever happened to you that Jesus was near to you in your grief, but you didn't recognize him? If it has, in what circumstances?
5. Why did both the angels and Jesus ask Mary why she was crying – they must have known it already?
 - Why does Jesus want you to tell him the reason for your tears, something he already knows anyway?
 - Do you think Mary's tears were in vain? Give your reasons.
 - How can we know if our tears are in vain or not?
6. What made Mary finally recognize Jesus (15-16)?
 - Why didn't Jesus want Mary to be carried away by her feelings (17)?
 - What can we learn from the behavior in this situation of Jesus as a man?
7. Women were not accepted as witnesses in courts at that time. Why did Jesus appear first to a woman, expressly making her the first witness of the resurrection?
 - Jesus was not bound by the unfair rules of his society, for example chauvinism or the strict regulations concerning the Sabbath. Why didn't he make Mary his twelfth apostle after Judas?
8. How do you think the resurrection of Jesus changed the rest of Mary's life?
What hope does the resurrection of Jesus bring to the rest of your life?