

# Ladies Man

*Seven Narrated Vignettes Featuring the Women of the Gospels*  
*By Shirley Harkins*

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# Ladies' Man

By

Shirley J. Harkins

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Drama Drash Ministries

(580)704-1983/www.Dramadrash.com

A series of seven vignettes featuring the various women of the gospel; touched, healed, and blessed by Jesus Christ.

Approx. Running Time: Two Hours

## **Cast**

NARRATOR (Adult Female)

WOMAN WITH AN ISSUE OF BLOOD (Female, thirty or older)

MARTHA (Female, thirty or over)

MARY OF BETHANY (Female, 16-30)

WOMAN AT THE WELL (Female 25-40)

ADULTRESS (Female 25-40)

SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN (Female 30-50)

SYROPHOENICIAN DAUGHTER (Female 10-16)

MARY 1 (Female, 15-20)

MARY 2 (Female, 25-35)

MARY 3 (Female, 45-55)

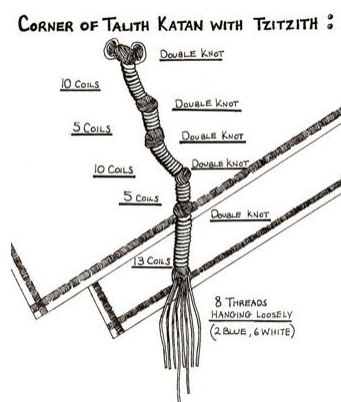
MARY 4 (Female, 45-55)

MARY 5 (Female, 55+)

EXTRAS (5-10 men and women to act as villagers in various vignettes)

## **Production Notes**

Ladies Man is written for an audience of women and works better with a female NARRATOR. NARRATOR stands at a podium, far L or R in front of the stage or dais. She needs to be spotlighted and will exit for each vignette. NARRATOR needs to have a Jewish prayer shawl at her podium—can be purchased inexpensively on line. A shawl can be made with white linen or cotton, 72" x 24". The cloth must be fringed on the ends with Tzit-tzit on the four corners. (See illustrations below) Straight black or blue lines can be drawn close to the edges.



Jesus is always a voice off stage. This presentation requires a great deal of F/X. An accompanying CD, LADIES MAN F/X can be purchased at Drama Drash.com. Otherwise, a knowledgeable sound crew and recording facilities are required to make this presentation effective. Track listing is below:

Track Listing:

*Track 1:*

JESUS: Who touched my garments?

VOICE 1: Master! The multitudes are crowding and pressing in upon You, and yet You say, 'Who touched my garments?'

VOICE 2: Everyone you pass touches You!

JESUS: Someone did touch Me for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.

JESUS: Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.

*Track 2:*

JESUS: What is written in the Law? How does it read to you? Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind. And your neighbor as yourself. Do this, and you will live. Here this parable of a certain man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went off leaving him half dead. By chance a certain priest was also going down on that same road, but when he saw the wounded man—thinking he was dead and not wishing to defile himself, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw the man, he passed by on the other side of the road. But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon the wounded man. When he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to the man, and bandaged up his

wounds, after pouring oil and wine on them. Then, the Samaritan put the man on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him there. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.' Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands? The one who showed mercy toward him. Go then and do the same.

*Track 3:*

JESUS: Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

JESUS: When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.'

*Track 4:*

VOICE 3: Rabbi, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.

VOICE 4: In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?

\*PAUSE \* 5 SECONDS

F/X: SCRATCHING IN THE SAND (20 Seconds)

VOICE 3: Rabbi? What say you?

VOICE 4: Do we stone the woman or not?

F/X: SCRATCHING STOPS

JESUS: He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.

F/X SCRATCHING IN THE SAND RESUMES AND CONTINUES FOR 30 MORE SECONDS AS

F/X 5 STONES DROPPING SLOWLY

F/X SCRATCHING IN THE SAND STOPS

*Track 5:*

JESUS: Woman!

JESUS: Where are they? Did no one condemn you?

JESUS: Neither do I condemn you; go on your way.

JESUS: From now on sin no more.

The woman with the alabaster jar can be presented as an interpretive dance to the song *Alabaster Box* by CeCe Winans, by a solo singer, or both. (*Alabaster Box*, © 1999, Little Pooky's Music/ASCAP)

Production can be done in an auditorium, sanctuary, or set up for a women's luncheon, tea, or brunch. Two spot lights are needed for lighting.

Drama Drash allows producing up to 30 copies of each downloaded script of Ladies Man, for director, cast, and technical crew. Another script must be downloaded for any additional copies.

All promotional materials (Press Releases, Flyers, Programs) must include the following information:

Ladies Man

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Feel free to call with production questions or email.

# Ladies Man

By Shirley Harkins

CUE SPOT LIGHT

ENTER NARRATOR STAGE RIGHT:

NARRATOR: A prayer can be found in the Jewish Siddur, or prayer book that reads “Blessed are thou O Lord our God Who has not made me a woman . . .” Indeed, the biblical world is a man’s world—or so it might *seem*. God doesn’t appear to share this weighted view of women. Dwight A. Pryor, President and Founder of the Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, offers a fresh perspective, citing Genesis 1:27 as evidence.

*And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* (NAS)

Pryor points out that both men and women were created in the Father’s image—not just the man. He also traces the literal translation of Genesis 2:18.

*“And the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.’”* (NAS)

Pryor explains that the word translated “helper” is actually two Hebrew words; *ezer kenegdo* which more accurately translates as “a power equal to man.” He supports this assertion with a quote from noted Jewish scholar, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch:

*“Ezer Kenegdo certainly expresses no idea of subordination [subservience or lesser value]—rather complete equality—and on a footing of equal independence—woman stands to man ‘kenegdo’—parallel—on one line at his side.”*

Our relationship with our husbands is like a dance. He holds us tenderly in his arms as he leads—but we are still dancing together—however—*ezer kenegdo* has even deeper implications. *Kenegdo* also implies connotations of opposition—similar to like poles on a magnet. Jewish sages teach that when God is present in the marital union, the woman corresponds to her partner. When God is not invited, the woman opposes.

Jewish men have always had a special understanding of and consideration for the feminine heart, and our Messiah was no exception. Evident throughout the gospels is His tender appreciation of women—publicly validating them through healing and other ministrations.

Three godly women, Rahab, Tamar, and Ruth were cited *by name* in His genealogy.<sup>1</sup> Other prominent women in His life, mentioned specifically by the gospel writers include such faith heroes as Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, Anna the Prophetess, and women like Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susannah, who accompanied the disciples on various missionary journeys and supported Jesus’ ministry from their own means.<sup>2</sup> Women abided bravely at the crucifixion<sup>3</sup>, through the burial, and were the first to the empty tomb on the third day<sup>4</sup>. The very human nature of Jesus was inherited from the woman who bore Him into the world.

Today, we are going to take a peek into biblical history for a firsthand look at seven women, graced with a touch from our Messiah. These stories, from the pages of Matthew, Luke, Mark, and John, were recorded there by divine inspiration and each interaction holds a timeless lesson for us, the faithful women of the modern church.

We begin our study with the woman with an issue of blood; an incident documented in all three synoptic gospels.<sup>5</sup> In each version, Jesus encounters the woman on the way to the home of Jairus, a synagogue official, but the circumstances may have more than just a chronological association. For instance, the woman hemorrhaged twelve years and Jairus's daughter was twelve years old—a coincidental detail or an indication of a deeper than surface level message? As modern Christians, we might not fully appreciate such subtle inferences provided by the divinely inspired authors. Let's try to envision the scene from their first century perspective.

In those days, the prevailing attitude was that illness resulted from sin, personal or generational, and precious little sympathy was to be had. Subsequently, the most piously religious men of the day were also considered physicians, and Mark, who elaborates the most on the woman, points out that she had suffered many things at the hand of these so-called healers. Very strange remedies were prescribed and when one didn't work, another was recommended—not without cost, of course. By the time Jesus crossed her path, the woman had exhausted her resources and had been left unclean and untouchable for over a decade.

A bodily discharge, like the one described here, rendered the first century Judean woman *unclean*. Ceremonial uncleanness didn't imply sinfulness, necessarily. Rather, it meant that while a Jew was unclean, he or she could not take part in Temple services or religious ceremonies. People rendered unclean for one reason or another typically isolated themselves from the community for a prescribed period of time. To touch others was to cause them to also be "unclean" and subject to ceremonial cleansing as well.

While being without sin for the duration of His earthly life, Jesus was at times ceremonially "unclean." The gospels clearly document incidents in which He knowingly compromised His ritual purity for the sake of others. For instance, anyone touching a dead body incurred ritual uncleanness.<sup>6</sup> In Matthew Chapter 9 and Luke 8, Jesus takes the hand of a dead child. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all document an incident when a leper<sup>7</sup>, knowing that such contact would render Jesus unclean, thoughtfully asked the Master if He was *willing* to heal him with a touch. Like the leper, the woman with the issue of blood might have feared that Jesus would resist contact, but she opted to sneak up behind Him to "touch the hem of His garment."

Why the hem specifically? Well, like most Jewish men of his time, Jesus wore a prayer shawl called a tallit. (tah-LEET) (Hold up prayer shawl and drape it around shoulders) Unlike the Jewish men of today, however, who wear the shawl only for prayer and synagogue services, Jesus and His disciples probably wore their tallits all the time.

When the priests of the first century invoked a public blessing, (Holding the corners of the shawl, lift hands to demonstrate) they raised the corners of the fringed tallit like wings. This effect is referenced in Malachi 4:2: *But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings . . .* (NAS)

The woman apparently knew this verse, or at least had heard it in the synagogue enough to know the allusion to the Messiah. At the time of Jesus's ministry, there were many itinerant preachers and healers but her behavior indicates a belief in His messianic anointing. *"And behold, a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; for she was saying to herself, 'If I only touch His garment, I shall get well.'"* (Matthew 9:21 NAS) She was right, and her faith was rewarded. (EXIT STAGE RIGHT)

FADE SPOT

## ***A Woman with Issues***

Cast:

Woman (Female 30+)

5-10 Villagers (8 Villagers are cast but lines can be doubled up or spread out if need be.)

Production notes: Single spot on woman. She is dressed in raggedy clothes—ankle length tunic, large mantle, a pill box type hat under her mantle, perhaps carrying a staff to lean on—leather sandals or bare feet. WOMAN must be obvious that she is trying NOT to touch the villagers.

When F/X is cued, a few actors can step on stage to suggest a procession—forcing the woman to crawl between them

CUE SPOT LIGHT

WOMAN ENTERS SPOT STAGE RIGHT

WOMAN: (Slowly, doubled over as if weary or in pain—shouting off stage) But, that was my last shekel! All that my father left me for a dowry—and I'm no better for it! I'll be reduced to begging. (Weepy, emotional) Have mercy on a poor woman. (Turn to audience) Can any of you help me? I have no money . . . nothing to eat. I'm not lazy. I want to marry—to raise a family—but the manner of a woman has been upon me for twelve years. I can't work—I can't marry. No one will come near—anything I touch is . . . (Act as if listening) Of course I tried to find help. I've traveled all over Judea—to all the physicians in the villages—who demanded so much money, and then asked me to perform ridiculous stunts! I should have known they couldn't help—but I was so desperate to be healed—to have a husband and a family! (Gesture off stage) This one was the worst! He asked me to dig seven pits—and me, plagued these twelve years! He told me to burn some dried vine branches in them—not any old vine branches, mind you. They couldn't come from vines more than 4 years old—these of course I had to buy. Then, after all that digging that I didn't have the energy or strength barely to do in the first place, I was supposed to take a cup of wine and march around to all the pits in a grand procession, (mimic the walk) saying, "Be free of thy sickness!" Well, I'm not free of my sickness! I'm free of my money! For twelve years, now! Twelve years! No one will have anything to do with me! I have no friends—no family. I can't go into the synagogue or the Temple—I have no God! If only Messiah were here—then I would not have to suffer so . . .

VILLAGERS (Enter STAGE L)

VILLAGER 1: Look! It's Jesus!

VILLAGER 5: The Rabbi from Nazareth!

VILLAGER 2: He heals the sick and drives out demons!

VILLAGER 3: I just saw Him heal a paralytic with my own eyes!

VILLAGER 4: I heard that He's on His way to heal the synagogue official's daughter!

VILLAGER 7: I heard Him preaching on the sea shore.

VILLAGER 6: I was there, too. I've never heard such teaching!

VILLAGER 9: He speaks with authority not like the Pharisees and the other teachers of our people.

VILLAGER 10: Could this be the Messiah?

VILLAGER 8: None of our traveling healers can perform the miracles like this Man!

WOMAN: (Reach for VILLAGER 2, but snap hand back.) This Man is a healer?

VILLAGER 2: (Look at her with revulsion, leaning away) They say He healed a demon possessed man in the country of the Gerasenes.

WOMAN: (TO VILLAGER 2) Ah, they all claim to be healers—but—look at the size of this crowd! (To VILLAGER 10) I've heard that the Messiah has come. Can this Rabbi from Nazareth be Him?

VILLAGER 10: Jairus thinks this Jesus can heal his daughter—and she lies near death.

WOMAN: (Gets excited) Please let me by. (Start forward as if merging with the crowd and stop and back up) What am I thinking? Even if He is a healer, He won't lay hands on me! I'm unclean! What can I do to get my healing? (Point out into audience, eyes wide) THERE HE IS! He's so close I can almost touch . . . that's it! His tallit! The prophets say that there is healing in Messiah's wings! If only I can reach the fringes on his tallit! (Fall to knees, reaching between VILLAGERS to the audience) I—can—barely—reach . . . (snap back, leaning back on heels, hugging self as if a healing is flowing through. Speak breathlessly) OH! Something IS happening to . . . I feel . . . strong . . . like my life has been restored to me . . . (Woman responds to voices—cowering)

CUE F/X: TRACK 1

JESUS: (Speaks from F/X) Who touched my garments?

VILLAGERS RESPOND BY LOOKING AT ONE ANOTHER

TWO MALE VOICES REPLY

VOICE 1: Master! The multitudes are crowding and pressing in upon You, and yet You say, 'Who touched my garments?'

VOICE 2: Everyone you pass touches You!

JESUS: Someone did touch Me for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.

PAUSE F/X

WOMAN: (Reacts to the dialogue, scooting back, hiding the lower part of her face in her mantle.)

VILLAGERS: (Part—turn and look back at woman)

WOMAN: (Lowers her mantle, look up as if looking up a Jesus) Rabbi, forgive me! Your maidservant has been in the manner of women these twelve long years, and has endured so much at the hands of the physicians and priests. I have spent all my money but I haven't gotten any better—only worse. No one will come near me—I've been alone for twelve years. I heard the crowd what the crowd was saying about You—I knew You wouldn't lay hands on me—not even the priests would do that—I am unclean. But the prophet said just one touch of your tallit would heal me.

RESUME PAUSED F/X

JESUS: (Very tenderly) Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.

(VILLAGERS CHEER AND MOVE OFF STAGE AS IF FOLLOWING JESUS)

WOMAN: Thank You, Rabbi! Thank You! (Raises hands in praise to God)

FADE TO BLACK

## CUE SPOT

NARRATOR: (ENTER STAGE RIGHT) Jesus felt the exchange of power and He was aware of the difference between that and the contact of a pressing crowd. He stopped—intrigued by the woman who had the faith to manifest such a miraculous effect. That sort of faith always gets Jesus’s attention. Interestingly, He gave the woman credit for her healing. “Your faith has made you well.” Could this mean that healing and restoration is freely available to all of us who have faith enough to reach out and get it?

As we will see, not all women in Jesus’ traveled territory would garner an affectionate epithet like “Daughter.” Directed by circumstances that only He knows, Jesus addressed some with a terse “Woman!” But all the women He encounters receive the same opportunity to respond rightly.

One woman who responded rightly was Mary—the sister of Martha and Lazarus. These three famous siblings live together in Bethany, a town about 2 miles from Jerusalem.

Although the nature of Jesus’s relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus isn’t explained, He spent quite a bit of time with them—preferring Bethany to Jerusalem—passing His nights there. In the Luke account, we are told that Martha invited Jesus to the house. This may have been the first time Martha, Mary, and Lazarus welcomed Him into their home or one of many visits.

In any event, we as women can relate to Martha’s stress—slaving to prepare an elaborate meal for an esteemed guest. She isn’t too off course. Hospitality was an important social function in the first century. While Martha was trying to be the hostess with the mostest, little sister, Mary, Luke tells us, sat at Jesus’s feet and heard the Word.

“Sitting at the feet of” is a Jewish idiom meaning to study Scripture with a certain known and recognized rabbi. Paul makes this same reference to his mentor, Gamaliel in Acts 22:3. That Mary sat at Jesus’s feet meant more than sneaking away from the kitchen for an afternoon. Mary may have been a serious student, studying the books of Moses, the prophets, and the writings with other disciples under the tutelage of Rabbi Yeshua. She probably wasn’t the only woman in Jesus’s *yeshiva* (yeh-SHEE-vah) or Bible school, either. Luke names a few of the women traveling with the Master—namely Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Suzanna.

Martha obviously thought that Mary should have been about more practical pursuits. Since Lazarus didn’t make a move to discipline the child, Martha took matters into her own hands, raising the issue to the Rabbi, Himself. (EXIT STAGE RIGHT)

## FADE SPOT

## ***Sibling Rivalry***

Cast:

Martha (F, 30+)

Mary (F, 16-30)

Two or three men to sit with Mary

Spot lights centered on each Mary and Martha.

Production notes: Both women are dressed in tunics to the ankle and pill box type head coverings. MARTHA has a muslin dishtowel and a piece of muslin tied around her waist like an apron. Her face is moist and red.

MARY is seated DSL with two or three men, looking off stage, as if listening to Jesus. She responds to what she is hearing off stage—nodding and smiling occasionally. She may converse with the men silently.

The men and MARY should have biblical looking book bags with several aged scrolls. Men and MARY respond to the offstage F/X. When MARTHA enters, discussion should begin and continue quietly at the same time MARTHA is delivering her soliloquy.

### CUE SPOTLIGHT

VILLAGER 1: Rabbi, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

### CUE F/X TRACK 2:

JESUS: What is written in the Law? How does it read to you? Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind. And your neighbor as yourself. Do this, and you will live. And who is your neighbor? Hear this parable of a certain man who was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. He fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went off leaving him half dead. By chance a certain priest was also going down on that same road, but when he saw the wounded man—thinking he was dead and not wishing to defile himself, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw the man, he passed by on the other side of the road. But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon the wounded man. When he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to the man. He poured oil and wine on the man's wounds and bound them in cloth. Then, the Samaritan put the man on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him there. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.' Now then—which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands? The one who showed mercy toward him, of course. Go then and see that you do the same. (Luke 10:25-36 NAS)

MEANWHILE:

MARTHA: (Enters SR, nervously, drying hands on towel—Speaks over the above teaching sequence.) Now then, the bread is baked, the mutton is in the oven, the table is set . . . (Stops short, glaring at MARY) And look at that girl! What does a girl need with studying the books of Moses and the prophets? Will it get her a husband any quicker? Laziness, I call it! A hundred chores to do and there she sits with the men, listening to the Rabbi from Nazareth. (Make a grand show of sighing, rubbing back, cause a scene to gain sympathy) Oh, for heaven's sake. No one even notices me over here—they're all so enthralled with what the Rabbi is saying. (A little louder as if to MARY) It would be nice if *someone* would help in the kitchen so that I could listen to what He has to say, too! After all, I'm the one who invited Him to dinner! But no . . . Mary and Lazarus leave all the work to good, old Martha. What would happen if I just plunked myself down with company and forgot about everything else? I suppose that it would be Martha's fault that there was nothing to feed the Rabbi. And look at Lazarus! He's not saying a word to Mary. As head of the house, he ought to make sure that the chores are handled fairly. Well, I'll tell you what! After the Rabbi leaves, I'm sitting everyone down for a family meeting! This is the last time I get stuck with all the chores while Mary and Lazarus chat with company! (Make a great show of rubbing back, sighing, cause a scene to gain sympathy. Look past Mary SL to see if anyone notices) I have had enough of this! I'll shame both Mary and Lazarus and have the Rabbi rebuke them in their own house! (Walk up behind Mary and speak off stage) Lord!

PAUSE F/X

MARTHA: Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me!

EVERYONE TURNS TO LOOK AT MARTHA

RESUME F/X: JESUS: Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:41, NAS)

PAUSE F/X

MARTHA: (Stand staring off stage in shock a few seconds.)

VILLAGERS AND MARY TURN BACK TO STAGE LEFT

VILLAGER 5: Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples!

RESUME F/X:

JESUS: When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.' (Luke 11:1-4 NAS)

Meanwhile . . .

MARTHA: (Turn away, cross to CS. Pause. Remove apron and throw it down with dishtowel off SR. Join Mary, sitting on the stage next to her.)

MARY: (Take Martha's hand and smile)

FADE SPOTLIGHT/ F/X

## CUE SPOT LIGHT

NARRATOR: (ENTER STAGE RIGHT) The story of Martha and Mary has never been more relevant and Jesus's rebuke is clear. Bible study—*the good part*—is the only pursuit we need concern ourselves with—even women, apparently. Everything else is secondary. Indeed, without a grounded understanding of biblical principle, how can we adequately perform in the ministry of womanhood—being a wife, mother, employee, and so on? If we are too busy with career, housework, kids, and carpools to spend a quiet time with the Master each day—we're too busy, Ladies.

Another woman recognized Jesus as something more than an itinerant rabbi. Documented only in the book of John, Jesus's fateful encounter with the woman at the well occurred near Sychar in Samaria at Jacob's Well. The well is still there—one of the few places where an exact geographical landmark connected to a biblical account can be identified. Jesus and His disciples passed through on a return trip to Galilee instead of following the Jordan valley—possibly because Samaria was outside of Herod's jurisdiction and the self-indulgent king had already imprisoned John the Baptist by this time.

After exiling the ten tribes of Israel from the northern kingdom around 700 BCE, the Assyrians planted colonists from five nations in Samaria. When natural disturbances befell the colonists, they sought Israelite priests to teach them the customs of the God of the land. The Samaritan woman may have been a descendant of the Israelite refugees or of one of the other nations. Either way, she had at least, a rudimentary understanding of messianic prophecy.

The Samaritans fully expected the Messiah to make Samaria and not Jerusalem His seat of government. Because of this and other apostate claims, the Samaritans were categorically despised by the Jews. Jews didn't speak to Samaritans, much less a Samaritan woman of questionable morals, so Jesus's breach of protocol surely caught the woman off guard.

John tells us that she was living with a man who was not her husband. She may have been a concubine, but Jesus didn't condemn her lifestyle. Rather, He applauded her candid answers. Perhaps it was the commanding presence of the Holy Spirit that drew the disheartening truth from her lips. Certainly, we'll all be babbling out confessions when we enter the presence of the Master.

As the conversation develops, Jesus tells her that He is the Messiah—an outright statement He fails to make even to His most trusted disciples. He didn't have to. His disciples and the people of Judah studied the books of Moses, the prophets, and the writings and had already discerned that they were in the presence of the promised King.

Revivified by the encounter with this Man Who treated her with dignity and offered her a simple antidote for sin and bondage, the Samaritan woman becomes the first evangelist, rushing unashamedly back into the village to urge others to come and meet Jesus.

## FADE SPOT

## ***A Deep Subject***

Cast:

1 Woman (25-40)

Villagers (Mixed male and female)

Production notes: While the NARRATOR is setting up the vignette, have the 5 VILLAGERS, in biblical attire, move inconspicuously into the audience. VILLAGER 5 will need a scroll.

WOMAN is dressed in biblical attire. Because she is not a Jew, she can wear jewelry and more colorful costuming. She'll move into and among the audience. She can grab hands, trying to get women to come with her.

BRING UP HOUSE LIGHTS

WOMAN: (ENTER SL and cross hurriedly into the audience.) Hey everybody! The Messiah is here! He's right here in Sychar! Can you imagine?! The Messiah!

VILLAGER ONE: (Rise) What are you going on about, Woman?

WOMAN: The Messiah!! I went out to draw my water and a Rabbi was sitting by the well—He asked me to give Him a drink.

VILLAGER TWO: (Rise) A Jew spoke to *you*?

WOMAN: Yes, the men traveling with Him seemed a little surprised, too, when they came back from town—though they didn't speak to me. He's eating with His men now . . . we can catch them if we . . . (Turn to go but VILLAGERS are not following) You don't believe me, do you?

VILLAGER FOUR: (Rise) Well, Dear. We esteem the word of an *honorable* woman—but—

WOMAN: (Subdued) I get it—because of the man I live with. Well, I need a roof over my head—food to eat. How am I supposed to find a proper husband without a dowry? I won't beg.

VILLAGER EIGHT: What did you do with your father's inheritance?

WOMAN: I spent the last of it—after my—husband sent me away.

VILLAGER THREE: (To VILLAGER TWO) Third of forth? (VILLAGERS CHUCKLE)

WOMAN: (Defiantly) My *fifth* husband—if you must know.

VILLAGER SEVEN: Why would the Messiah speak to you, of all people? Why didn't He come into town with His disciples and inquire after our priests?

WOMAN: I don't know—I . . .

VILLAGER SIX: Mm-hmm. And what *did* this Messiah of yours have to say?

WOMAN: He said, “If you knew who asks you to give Him a drink, you’d ask Him, and He would give you living water—and everyone who drinks of this water will never thirst again.”

VILLAGER FIVE: (Opens a scroll and starts examining it) “Living Water?—Like the Fount of Living Water the great prophet Jeremiah mentions?”

WOMAN: I don’t know. I didn’t understand. I told him, “Give me some of this water so I won’t get thirsty and have to go all the way out there to the well.”

VILLAGER THREE: Lazy woman! What did He say to that?

WOMAN: He told me to go fetch my husband.

VILLAGER TWO: (Shares the joke with VILLAGER THREE) And how did you answer?

WOMAN: I told Him the truth. I had to—I couldn’t help myself—the way He looked at me, I felt like He already knew the truth anyway. He told me all the things that I’d done. Who else but a great Prophet would know such things? But He didn’t condemn me—I think He understood—how terrible it was to be rejected and sent away five times—

VILLAGER SEVEN: See? Our fathers were right! The Messiah has come to us and this very mountain is the place where we should worship God.

VILLAGERS START WALKING TOWARD WOMAN

WOMAN: No! He told me that we don’t really know the God we worship—but the Jews do.

VILLAGER FIVE: (Astounded) The Jews know God and we don’t?

WOMAN: Yes, He told me that they know the God they worship and that salvation comes from the Jews.

VILLAGERS: (Look at each other)

WOMAN: The Father seeks worshipers who worship *Him*—it doesn’t matter where we worship—on our mountain or in Jerusalem—if we don’t worship Him in spirit and in truth. I didn’t understand such words so I told Him that Messiah was coming soon and He would declare all things.

VILLAGER NINE: And? And? What did He say, Woman?

WOMAN: (Dramatic pause—look into the faces of all five VILLAGERS) He said, “I who speak to you am He.”

VILLAGERS: (Stand dumbfounded a moment—staring at one another)

VILLAGER SIX: Well, what are we waiting for? The Messiah is out by the well!

WOMAN: Let's go!

VILLAGERS and WOMAN: (EXIT STAGE LEFT) Hustle out, hurrying, talking excitedly.

DIM HOUSE LIGHTS

## CUE SPOT LIGHT

NARRATOR: (ENTER STAGE RIGHT) Remember the reaction you received when you told your friends and family that you had turned your life over to Jesus? Perhaps you were treated the same way as the woman at the well. She courageously persisted and John tells us many more Samaritans were saved. We do well to persevere in our testimony, even in the face of ridicule and persecution, and not look back on the life we left behind. As the Master tells us, *"No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* (Luke 9:62, NAS)

Although her name is never mentioned, the woman with the alabaster jar from Luke's gospel is one of the most memorable women in the gospels. There is not a single, scriptural basis for identifying this woman as either Mary Magdalene or Mary of Bethany who anointed Him with perfume the night before He ate the Passover with His disciples in Jerusalem. The latter occurred near Jerusalem in the home of Simon the Leper. The Luke account of the woman with the alabaster jar took place at the home of a Pharisee, also named Simon, somewhere on the Master's travels between Nain and Capernaum.

Mary of Bethany was never depicted as a "sinful" woman as was the woman mentioned by Luke. Luke doesn't elaborate on the nature of the woman's sin in his narrative, but her reputation was apparently well known.

Because Jesus was reclining at the table, leaning on his left elbow with His feet folded behind, the woman approached easily; weeping, kissing His feet, bathing them in costly perfume. This perfume was sealed in a jar and traditionally saved for a woman's wedding night. As such, her gift was particularly precious.

Jesus responds tenderly to this repentant woman, bowing low in abject humility and devoted adoration at His feet. Interestingly, He almost seems to duplicate the gesture for His disciples, washing their feet at the Last Supper—not in repentance but as a demonstration of how we should meekly serve one another.

John tells us that Peter resists at first, unwilling to submit to the Master's humble gesture—but that's what submission is all about—not only submitting to the best judgment and leadership of our husbands and pastors. We must be being willing to yield to the tender ministry given to us by the significant men in our lives—just as Jesus graciously accepted the penitent gesture of the woman with the alabaster box. (EXIT STAGE RIGHT)

## CUE SPOT FOR SOLO OR INTERPRETIVE DANCE

## CUE SPOT

NARRATOR: (ENTER STAGE RIGHT) Contrived by God, so many gospel stories, while reliable accounts of actual, historical events, double as real life illustrations of prophetic metaphors. Like the woman with the Alabaster jar—and the adulteress of John’s gospel. The scribes and the Pharisees in Jerusalem use the adulteress to test Jesus’s devotion to Mosaic Law—as an attempt to discredit Him before His followers, but they have no clue of the spiritual dilemma they actually backed Him into.

Mosaic Law was clear on the matter of adultery. The woman in such cases was to be put to death.<sup>8</sup> However, rather than stoop to pick up a stone, Jesus writes in the sand on the courtyard floor, while the woman’s self-righteous accusers pummel Him with questions. Many scholars have speculated on what the Master may have written—a list of the sins of the accusers—the names of the men who frequented the adulteress’s bedchamber . . . Instead, perhaps Jesus wrote the words His Father spoke through the prophets regarding the adulteries of Israel.

700 years before, God had exiled the adulterous, ten northern tribes, dispersing them to the four winds. Israel’s sin of adultery wasn’t committed with man but with false gods, pagan images, and detestable rituals. Equally guilty of adulterous paganism, Judah obtained the unmerited favor because of God’s covenant with David and was allowed to survive even until this day as Jews. Through prophets like Ezekiel, God promises that He won’t be angry forever—that these ten lost tribes would be gathered in once again and all twelve tribes of Israel would be restored into a unified kingdom under the reign of a Davidic king. Jesus Himself testifies that He was sent to these lost sheep of the house of Israel.<sup>9</sup>

The Master may have balked at a public stoning of the adulteress because the implicated man was not also brought to justice, as prescribe by Moses. More likely, however, He hesitated to condemn her to death because like Gomer, the wife of Hosea, the adulteress woman metaphorically represented the ten lost tribes that God had vowed to forgive and restore.

In an object lesson, Jesus extends mercy to the woman, outsmarting her accusers by throwing their hypocrisy in their faces. According to Deuteronomy 17:7, in the case of a death sentence, the accuser is to cast the first stone. Jesus adds a challenging caveat. *"He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."* (John 8:7, NAS)

He didn’t mean that the accuser had to be totally innocent of all sins—but one, at least, who wasn’t guilty, himself, of adultery.

The scribes and Pharisees, metaphorically representing the Jews in this picture, shamed by their own hypocrisy, drop their stones, and walk away.

This vignette is audience participation. We’ll need you Ladies to recreate the mob atmosphere of this poignant event. You’ll find a small basket of stones on your tables. We ask that each one of you select one and when the men shout to stone the woman, we ask that you rise, lift up your stone, and level it at the Adulteress. Thank you.

(EXIT STAGE RIGHT)

## FADE SPOT

## ***Where Are Your Accusers?***

Cast

Adulteress (F, 25-40)

MALE Villagers

Production Notes: This skit is performed on a dark, empty stage with a single spot light. The adulteress is disheveled and bruised. Use sandbags for stones. The stage should be littered with them—enough for the villagers to pick up and aim at the Adulteress.

VILLAGERS ENTER CENTER AISLE, HAULING THE ADULTERESS THROUGH THE SANCTUARY OR AUDITORIUM. THEY DEPOSIT HER IN THE CENTER OF THE SPOT LIGHT. THEY SHOUT ANGRILY AS THEY PROCEED TO THE STAGE. THE ADULTERESS SHOULD RESIST AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

VILLAGER 1: Adulteress! Adulteress!

VILLAGER 2: Caught in the very act!

VILLAGER 5: The adulteress shall surely be put to death!

VILLAGER 6: Put away the wickedness out of Israel!

VILLAGER 7: Stone her!

VILLAGER 9: She has defiled the city!

VILLAGER: 8 She's worthy of death!

GATHERED AROUND THE ADULTERESS ON STAGE, THE CROWD CONTINUES TO RAVE AS THEY DEPOSIT THE ADULTERESS ON STAGE.

ADULTERESS IS FRIGHTENED AND COWERING: No! No! Please have mercy!

CUE F/X TRACK 4:

VOICE 3: Rabbi, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act.

VOICE 4: In the Law, Moses commands us to stone such women; what then do You say?

PAUSE F/X

VILLAGERS PICK UP STONES, shaking them in the air, calling out Stone Her! Aim stones at ADULTRESS

ADULTRESS: NO! Please! Have mercy! Let me live!

ACTION IN SPOTLIGHT FREEZES AS:

CUE SPOT ON NARRATOR:

NARRATOR: Can I have the house lights, please? (Step to podium carrying a stone and looks around after lights come up and see if audience is on their feet) You aren't aiming your stones. Everyone please, pick up a stone. (Wait until they do—not important if they stand or not) Okay, now. Let's all take aim at the adulteress. (Pause) Hmmm. That's not a comfortable position for us, is it. In our modern congregations, we are taught not to judge, but was Jesus trying to illustrate a "judge not" lesson here? In God's Law, adultery<sup>10</sup>, murder<sup>11</sup>, kidnapping<sup>12</sup>, sexual deviance<sup>13</sup>, parental abuse<sup>14</sup>, profaning the Sabbath<sup>15</sup>, blasphemy<sup>16</sup>, divination<sup>17</sup>, and idol worship<sup>18</sup> were considered sins unto death—on the consistent testimony of two witnesses. The negative influence was to be eradicated from the Israelite community. Jesus upheld this very premise in a sermon to His disciples. *And if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you . . .* (Matthew 18:8 NAS) The Master wasn't literally suggesting that we mutilate ourselves—He was referring to the *corporate* Body. To paraphrase, Jesus tells us not to tolerate sin, lest it corrupt the entire community. *Cut it off and cast it out.* The modern church has assimilated a worldly mentality—especially with regard to tolerance—and because we look the other way and allow sin a place in our congregations, the Body of Messiah is unclean, unholy, and unprepared for the bridegroom's return. The Master gave us the formula for ministering discipline within the congregation: *And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that **by the mouth of two or three witnesses** every fact may be confirmed. And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer. . .* (Matt 18:15-17, NAS) And according to Paul; *I wrote to you not to associate with any **so-called brother** if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? **Do you not judge those who are within the church?** But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.* (1 Cor 5:11-13, NAS) Unfortunately, correcting our sisters in Messiah can be just as uncomfortable as (throw stone up in the air and catch it) throwing these stones—especially if *we* live in glass houses. Once we remove the plank from our own eyes, we can become loving and encouraging watchmen of the Body of Messiah. You may be seated. (Exit)

DIM HOUSE LIGHTS

ACTION RESUMES ON STAGE

VILLAGERS: Shake stones in the air, calling out Stone Her!

ADULTRESS: NO! Please! NO! Help me! Someone save me!

F/X: SCRATCHING IN THE SAND

ADULTRESS AND VILLAGERS ALL LOOK OUT—SOME CONFUSION ON THEIR FACES.

VOICE 3: Rabbi? What say you?

VOICE 4: Do we stone the woman or not?

F/X: Scratching stops

JESUS: He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.

F/X SCRATCHING IN THE SAND IS HEARD

THE VILLAGERS LOOK OUT IN THE AUDIENCE AS IF WAITING TO SEE WHAT THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES WILL DO.

F/X STONES DROPPING SLOWLY

VILLAGERS LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER—LOWER ARMS TO SIDE.

VILLAGER 6: Drop stone and EXIT STAGE L

VILLAGER 5: Drop stone and EXIT STAGE L

VILLAGER 2 & 7: Drop stones and EXIT STAGE L

VILLAGER 9, 1 & 8: Drop stones and EXIT STAGE L

ADULTRESS watches VILLAGERS exit one-by-one. When stage is empty, she looks out expectantly into the audience. Makes a show straightening her clothing and her hair, looking L and R.

CUE F/X: TRACK 5

JESUS: Woman!

PAUSE F/X

ADULTRESS: (Startled) Yes, Lord.

RESUME F/X

JESUS: Where are they? Did no one condemn you?

PAUSE F/X

ADULTRESS: (Look around again) No one, Lord.

RESUME F/X

JESUS: Neither do I condemn you; go on your way.

FADE F/X

ADULTRESS: (Rises and starts to hurry off STAGE LEFT) Thank You, Lord. Thank You.

JESUS: But from now on sin no more.

ADULTRESS: (Look down, very contrite.) No, Lord. Never again. Thank You, Lord. Thank You. (Hurries off STAGE L)

FADE TO BLACK

## CUE SPOT

NARRATOR: (ENTER STAGE RIGHT) Jesus responds to the woman like a wounded lover, forgiving her with a brusque warning to “sin no more.” Did He mean for her not to sin at all? Of course not. Solomon and Paul both remind us that we all fall short. Perhaps Jesus was charging her specifically to repent from the sin of adultery. In the same manner, when we are delivered from a stronghold, we must desist—resolving never to fall into the same sinful pattern, or—as Jesus admonishes the man healed at Bethesda—something worse may befall us.<sup>19</sup>

Jesus came upon yet another woman—this time in the in the region of Tyre, roughly fifty miles northwest of Nazareth. While the gospel writers never say that Jesus entered Tyre itself—a city Ezekiel equates with the Anti-Christ<sup>20</sup>—He traveled through this region on at least two occasions.

The woman fell at His feet, crying out in a loud voice. Matthew describes her as a Canaanite and Mark as a woman of the Syrophenician race—either way, she was a gentile, yet she knew to call Jesus the “Son of David.” The woman also knew to use a humble and respectful approach. Without flinching, she played along with Jesus’s smarting analogy—characterizing her as a dog begging for food. “Dog” was a term used by Jews to express their disdain for Gentiles.

Her faithfully persistent response impresses even the author and perfecter of faith. “O woman,” He says, “Your faith is great.”<sup>21</sup> Wouldn’t we thrill to hear Jesus say those words? If there is one thing we’ve learned from our study thus far is that nothing delights the Master more than faith. (EXIT STAGE RIGHT)

## FADE SPOT

## ***O Woman!***

Cast:

Syrophoenician Woman (F, 30-50)

Daughter (F, 8-15)

1 Dog

Production Notes: The woman needs a period dress—can dress it up with bright colors and jewelry. She will be sitting on a bench and needs something to do with her hands—needle work. The daughter, also in period dress, sits on the stage floor beside the WOMAN with a dog on a rope leash. The dog needs to be well trained, one that will be content stay in place for the entire skit.

CUE SPOT

DAUGHTER: (Look up at audience) Hi! (Looks up at WOMAN questioningly)

WOMAN: (Nod approval)

DAUGHTER: This is my new dog. My mom gave him to me as a gift to celebrate my healing. I had a bad spirit in me that made me do horrible things. My mom tried to heal me, but none of our household gods answered her prayers. Well, a great Rabbi named Jesus came from Galilee and traveled through our land, telling us about the God of the Jews. Everyone said that He could heal people so my mom went out to ask Him to deliver me, too. Lots of people wanted to get healed—the Rabbi Jesus was surrounded by them. My mom couldn't seem to get close enough so she started to shout.

WOMAN: (Smile and shake head at the memory)

DAUGHTER: She yelled and yelled until some of the men traveling with Rabbi Jesus became angry. They couldn't hear Him teach for all her carrying on. They told Rabbi Jesus to send my mom away. Instead, He listened to what she had to say, but Jesus told her that He couldn't heal me—that He was sent to the lost sheep of Israel.

WOMAN: He didn't mean real sheep, Dear. He was talking about His people who were lost from their God.

DAUGHTER: Oh, I see... Well, even though we're Caananites, my mom bowed low in front of Rabbi Jesus and asked Him to help us and then what did He say to you?

WOMAN: He told me that it isn't good to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs.

DAUGHTER: Was He calling us dogs?

WOMAN: Yes, it was a real slap in the face, but I don't think He was trying to be mean—He was testing my faith.

DAUGHTER: Then what did you say to the Rabbi?

WOMAN: (Shake head) Oh, you know. I told you the story fifty times by now.

DAUGHTER: One more time—please?

WOMAN: Okay. (Put down needlework) I was almost too afraid to speak, but because I wanted you well and His voice sounded so kind, I dared to answer. I remember when I was a child and how the dogs would wait under the table for a scrap to fall. I told Him that the even the dogs feed from the crumbs that fall from the Master's table.

DAUGHTER: Then what did the Rabbi say?

WOMAN: Jesus said, "O woman, your faith is great. Be it done for you as you wish." You were healed that very instant! (Matthew 15:28, NAS)

DAUGHTER: (Smiles and turns back to audience) When my mom came home, she brought this dog with her to remind us every day how important it is to have faith. So, that's what I named him (her) —Faith!

WOMAN: (Gathering her things) Come along, Dear. It's time to go in. (Bow to audience and EXIT STAGE L)

DAUGHTER: (Rise) Okay. (Wave to audience) I have to go now. Good bye! C'mon Faith! Here boy (girl) ! (EXIT STAGE L)

FADE SPOT

ALTERNATE SCRIPT FOR WOMAN'S MONOLOGUE

WOMAN holding dog enters STAGE L (Place dog in bedding in case of an accident)

WOMAN: Just look at this little pup. Isn't she/he sweet? I found her wandering around the market and I'm going to take her home to my daughter as a gift to celebrate her healing—she's so much better now—back to her old self. (Shake head—shudder) She had a bad spirit that made her do horrible things. I tried to pray for her—I cut myself and cried out on the top of my lungs, but none of our household gods answered my prayers.

I was about to give up all hope, when a great Rabbi named Jesus came from Galilee and traveled through our land, telling us about the God of the Jews. Everyone said that He could heal people

so even though I'm a Gentile, I went out to ask Him to deliver my daughter, too. Lots of people wanted to get healed—the Rabbi Jesus was surrounded by them. I couldn't seem to get close enough—I was so desperate that I started to shout.

(Smile and shake head at the memory)

I yelled and yelled until some of the men traveling with Rabbi Jesus got angry—claiming they couldn't hear Him teach for all her carrying on. They told Rabbi Jesus to send me away. Instead, Jesus sent for me, but only to tell me that He couldn't heal my daughter because He was sent to the lost sheep of Israel.

He didn't mean real sheep, of course. He was talking about His people who were lost from their God. I'd gotten that far—and this Rabbi was my last hope. Even though I'm a Caananites, I bowed low in front and asked Jesus to help us.

Then He said that it isn't good to take the children's bread and give it to the dogs . . . Dogs! He called me a dog in front of all those people! I was so humiliated that I almost turned away but then, He was looking at me so intently—almost like He was looking for something that I didn't even know I had! I remembered when I was a child and how the dogs would wait under the table for a scrap to fall. So I swallowed my pride, took another deep breath—and I told him that even the dogs feed from the crumbs that fall from the Master's table.

I still get goosebumps when I think about what He said to me. Jesus said, "O woman, your faith is great. Be it done for you as you wish." My daughter was healed that very instant! (Matthew 15:28, NAS)

Now, I going to bring this little dog home to remind me every day how important it is to have faith. That's what I named her —Faith!

I guess I better hurry along and get this little pup some food and water. (Turn back) Uh, Shalom!

## CUE SPOT

NARRATOR: (ENTER STAGE RIGHT) Surprisingly little is said in the gospel narratives about the mother of Jesus. Mary, of course, is the western rendering of her name. She was most likely known as Miriam—and Jesus called her, *eemah*—the Hebrew word for mother.

What qualities did God see in Mary that He chose her to be mother to His Son? Luke's gospel gives us the greatest insight into her character when she responds with humble assent to all the angel tells her about the virgin birth. In the spontaneously uttered Magnificat, Mary only mentions herself three times. She ponders the extraordinary circumstances surrounding her Son's life, treasuring them in her heart.

Somewhere over the years, as she nursed the infant Jesus, helped Him take His first steps, and kissed His boo-boos, did Mary ever forget that He was the Messiah? She encouraged Jesus to perform His first miracle in Cana but then sought Him out in Capernaum, concerned that He'd lost His mind<sup>22</sup>. And how was it, being a good Jewess, that she scoured Jerusalem for three days, searching for her lost twelve-year-old and the last place she thought to look was in the Temple?

At some point, Mary moved from being Jesus's mother to being His disciple, joining His entourage and following Him, even to the cross. (EXIT STAGE RIGHT)

## FADE SPOT

## ***According to His Word***

Cast:

Mary 1, the flight to Egypt. (F, 15-20)

Mary 2, searching for Jesus in Jerusalem, (F, 25-35)

Mary 3, On the streets of Capernum (F, 45-55)

Mary 4, at the foot of the cross, (F, 45-55)

Mary 5: At the end of her life (F, 55+)

Production notes: the set is bare, with each Mary in the center of a single spot.

### CUE SPOT

MARY 1: (Enter STAGE LEFT, baby doll in her arms, steps into spotlight) Oh! (gasps and step back a bit, clutching the baby to her chest) You startled me! I thought you were one of Herod's soldiers. I don't want any trouble. I just want to get my Son out of Bethlehem safely. You see, my husband, Joseph had one of his dreams again—the kind where an angel appears to him. (Smile and shrug) I talked to an angel once, too—only I wasn't dreaming. He said "Hail Favored One—the Lord is with you." He told me that I was going to be over shadowed by the Holy Spirit and that I would have a Baby Boy— a great King like David—Who would reign over all of Israel forever—the Son of the Most High. Poor Joseph—we were only betrothed at the time. He could have had me stoned on my father's door step,<sup>23</sup> but he didn't accuse me. He didn't believe me about the angel, either, not until one appeared to him in a dream. But I can't be too hard on Joseph—I didn't understand everything that was going on until I went to visit my cousin, Elizabeth. Oy, she looked so happy—expecting her first baby—and at her age—but all of the great men of Scripture were born under miraculous circumstances—Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—Elizabeth's boy, John—and now, my little Yeshua. All this happened the year of the great census, and we traveled to Bethlehem right before the Baby was due. Oy! I was so miserable on that donkey, I would have been better off walking! My ankles and feet swelled and my legs got so stiff. Then after riding all day, we had to sleep on the ground—if that's what you call sleeping—an aching back kept me awake all night. Things weren't much better in Bethlehem at first, but when Jesus was born. (Look down at baby) Nothing else mattered. He's just the sweetest little thing! The town cleared out after the census, and Joseph and I found a nice house. We've been here over two years now. Of course, we went into Jerusalem to take care of all the things Moses told us to do when a baby is born—especially the Messiah. Joseph and I wanted to make sure we did everything right. We were such a happy little family—until yesterday—we had visitors from the east who brought expensive gifts—and it's a good thing, too. We'll need the money to make another long trip. Joseph says we have to go all the way to Egypt because Herod wants to kill little Yeshua! You'd think that everyone would be happy that Messiah has finally come—instead we have to flee like refugees. Why should the Son of God have to run from any man? I don't understand, but (Look up as if to heaven) I am the bonds slave of the Lord; let it be done to me according to Your word. (Look around, snuggle baby to chest) Joseph! (Hurry out of spotlight—STAGE LEFT)

MARY 2 ENTERS LIGHT FROM STAGE LEFT

MARY 2: (As if scolding) Yeshua! Yeshua! You stay with Joseph and your little brothers this time and don't go wandering off again! Oy! (Shake head and chuckle) That Boy! The Son of God. You'd think He'd let a person know where He'd be! Next time we go up to Jerusalem for a feast, I'll remember to check the Temple before we leave! But with the Passover and all, the city was packed and so was the road back home. I thought Yeshua was with Joseph and Joseph thought He was with me. We were a day's walk out of Jerusalem—stopping to camp for the night—when we realized that we'd left Him behind! Oy! What kind of mother is that—leaves her firstborn in the city by Himself? (Shake head) When we went around asking our friends and relatives if they'd seen Him, the women looked at me like I was the worst mother in the world. When we didn't find Him, Joseph and I had to walk all the way back to Jerusalem—it reminded me of when Yeshua was born . . . The whole way I wondered if God was angry at me—like Joseph was at first—for doing such a horrible job of minding His Son. I felt even worse when it took us three days of wandering around Jerusalem to find Yeshua—and He was right. I should have known where He'd be. All the way from Nazareth, all my Boy could talk about was the Temple—My Father's house this and My Father's house that. Oy, and you should have seen my Boy—talking to those scholarly men. Yeshua speaks with such authority when He talks about the Books of Moses and the prophets—more than a boy of twelve learns in the yeshiva—I'm so proud of Him, but raising Yeshua hasn't been easy, you know. I hear women in the market talking about their (air quote) “perfect” children—well, my Son really *is* perfect. He's not like other tweens who think they know everything—He really does and those patronizing looks He gives me hurt sometimes. (Shake head sadly) I wonder why God chose me of all women to bring His Son into the world? He's only twelve—I have so many years to go before He's grown and and takes the Throne of David. So many things could go wrong . . . (Look up—raise palms up as in prayer) Lord, behold Your bonds slave—let it be done to me according to Your word. Oy! Look at me standing here in the road, gabbing away. Now, I'm the one who's left behind. Joseph! Yeshua! Wait for me! (MARY 2 hurries out of spotlight STAGE LEFT)

MARY 3 enters STAGE LEFT

MARY 3: Excuse me, have you seen my Son? (Turn and call out to someone off stage) James! Try that house on the corner...yes, that one there. And Joses? You and Simon try the next block. (Turn back to audience) I know Yeshua's in Capernaum somewhere and I've traveled here with His brothers to take Him home. If He keeps preaching like He does, they're going to kill Him. He barely made it out of Nazareth alive! Perform a few little miracles, heal the sick—that isn't too outrageous, but forgiving sins? Oy! What is my Yeshua thinking? Does He think the Scribes and Pharisees will put up with that kind of talk? Herod already has His cousin, John, locked up. Sure, Yeshua is God's Son, but Joseph—Elizabeth, Zacharias—they're all dead and gone, and no one else will believe me. Even His brothers—they make excuses for Him—that He's lost His mind, so bereaved over His father's death and the stress of having to look after a big family. I'm even beginning to think that He might be a little confused and I blame myself for it. I should have minded my own business in Cana and not pressured Yeshua into performing a miracle, embarrassing Him in front of His friends—still—I didn't ask Him to make *great* wine—everyday wine would have been just fine and no one would've noticed. Then, if that wasn't

enough, He marches into the synagogue and announces that He's the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. It must have been that 40 days out in the wilderness—no water—no food, in the blazing heat. He's never been the same, you know. He told me He was going down to the Jordan to hear His cousin preach. Now, John has always been just a little over the top, but I didn't think Yeshua would get caught up in all that. Why would He need to be baptized anyway? He's the Son of God—for heaven's sake! I know it was over 30 years ago, but that angel told me that Yeshua would be a King like David. Why doesn't He sit on His throne and run all these Romans out of our promised land? No, what is He doing? He's having dinner—with tax collectors, and lepers, and—*those* kind of women. Well, no wonder nobody takes Him seriously. Oh, here comes James. James, is He in the house? He is? Well, what did He say? (Act as if listening) What? (Clasp at heart—very hurt) He said that *those* people in there are His brothers, and sisters, and—*mother?*---His *mother??* (Look up) Father? Did You hear that? What will I do, now? I don't know how to protect Him anymore. (Wait for an answer—deflated but resigned) Behold, your bonds slave. May it be done to me according to Your Word. . . (Walks out of light, STAGE LEFT shaking head)

MARY 4: (Stumble into spot—lowering herself to her knees, weeping) I can't look! I can't bear to see Him like this. (Look up at audience) They've stripped Him and hung Him up on that stake in front of everyone—His disciples—His friends—even His own mother. (Put hands over ears) When those hammers fell—my Son cried out in agony. He's a man—He feels pain—every single blow of the whip, the fists, the spikes going through His feet. Oh, His feet—I used to nibble on His toes when He was a baby—now, His feet are crusted with pierced—crusted in blood, swelled, and bruised. And His tunic—the one I wove for Him. It was all one piece—no seams—like the menorah in the Temple—beaten from one piece of fine gold—I made it like that because Yeshua was the Light of *my* life. I asked the soldiers to give it back to me, but they cast lots for it. (Shake head) At lease they didn't tear it apart—What am I saying? Worrying about His tunic? I must be going mad! I kept thinking—hoping—that something would happen—that maybe His disciples would rise up to defend Him—or that angels would come and spirit Him away—He's escaped stonings before—God never allowed Him to fall into the hands of these angry people—But I can't blame *them*—they thought He would be a great warrior, like David. They feel betrayed—I feel betrayed, too! I've waited all my life to see my Son crowned—oh, they crowned Him alright. They crowned Him in thorns—and they spit on Him—and they laughed at Him. (Look up as if to heaven) He's not going to escape this time, is He? But, why are You going to let our Son die like this? Why didn't You take Him to a mountain top like Moses—or—or fly Him away on a chariot like Elijah? How will He be King and restore Israel? You promised that His kingdom will have no end—but Father! It's all coming to an end! (Raise hands to heaven) My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has had regard for the humble state of His bonds slave; Behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed—blessed—(Luke 1:46-49 NAS) (Sob) Behold—behold the bonds slave of the Lord—may it be done to me according to Your word. (Bow down)

FADE SPOT

MARY 4 EXIT STAGE LEFT

CUE SPOT

MARY 5: (From outside the spotlight) Hello? Who's there? (MARY 5 steps into spotlight from STAGE LEFT—tent hand over eyes, looking out into the audience) My eyes aren't what they used to be. How kind of you to greet an old woman. Yes, yes come walk with and I will tell you about my Son—my firstborn Son. Do you know Him? His name is Yeshua—the Messiah. *My Son!* (Shake head) God chose me to be the fragile vessel to bring HIS Son into the world—but Yeshua never needed a mother to raise Him—He had a legion of angels to minister to Him. My husband and I—even His brothers and sisters—we were just part of Yeshua's human experience . . . He's gone now—but He isn't dead. Oh, they tried to kill Him. (shake head sadly) All my hopes died that day they hung Him on the stake—especially when He handed me over to His friend. John made good on his promise to look after me, though. After they laid Yeshua into a tomb, John led me away with the others to wait. None of us knew what we were waiting for—oh, Yeshua told us that He'd rise again—but we were all devastated with grief. We couldn't put two coherent thoughts together. But then on the morning after the Sabbath, some women went to anoint His body and found the tomb empty—except for a nice young man who told them that my Son had risen from the dead—just like He said He would! Yeshua even appeared to Mary the Magdalene right there in the garden—I was almost envious—I am His mother, after all, but He spent His last 40 days on earth with His disciples—He'd given me over to John, and that was that. But before He went back up to heaven to be with His Father, He told us what we're supposed to be doing until He returns—make disciples of the nations—cleansing them and teaching them to live by His commandments. It isn't enough to tell people about Him—we must tell them about the way He lived and teach them how to live that way. He is the Way, the Truth, the Life and no one comes to the Father, but through Him—doing what He did—living like He did—loving the Father like He did. It's not hard, my dears—He said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and *learn* from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light." (Matt 11:28-30 NAS) His way gives rest. His truth will set you free. The life He gives is eternal. If we believe what He says, we'll do what He tells us to do. Love God, love ourselves, and love each other. (chuckle) The rest is commentary, my dears. There's this group that follows Paul, another baptized by John or Apollos. (Wave them off) Those are just men—oh, they're great men, but Yeshua's believers sometimes disagree about what this man says or that man teaches or how this other fellow interprets the Scripture. If Yeshua's church can just put all that aside and unite on what *God* says and live together in peace and holiness—then we will be dressed up like a bride—ready and waiting for her bridegroom's return. *It's so much more* than having a personal relationship with Yeshua—it's about the community—His Body—loving, serving, edifying, and upholding each other—like when we carry a child in our womb, that infant get the nourishment we eat first—the oxygen we breathe. That's how we should love and serve the members of my Son's Body. Isn't that what He did, my dears? Didn't He get down on his knees—the Son of God—and wash the feet of His disciples? How long has it been since you washed your sister's feet? My dears, when we gave our lives to Yeshua, we became bondslaves of the Lord. And praise God! May it be done to us, according to His word.

FADE SPOT

## CUE SPOT ON NARRATOR:

NARRATOR: (ENTER STAGE RIGHT) The Gospel writers—probably because they *weren't* women—don't describe the reaction of the women to Jesus's mercy but it's not a difficult scenario to create in our minds. Each of us who know the Lord faced a similar moment when He came into our lives every bit as boldly and abruptly. His forgiveness of our sins has been as complete and His mercy as unconditional as it was with each of these women portrayed here this afternoon.

The greatest challenge of the spiritual walk is not to be forgiven for our sins and short comings. Forgiveness is free. It was finished, as Jesus said, on the cross. We must learn to accept that forgiveness—and we know we have when we can extend that same grace to our brothers and sisters in Messiah—forgiving them for their wrongs, correcting them with love and humility, and loving them in their imperfection.

We are blessed to be women in the Kingdom of God, to share a powerful and poignant history with Jesus. May our lives demonstrate our partnership with the Messiah.

## Notes:

Dwight A. Pryor, *The Image and Ministry of Women*, audio commentary, Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, May 2002

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 1:3-5

<sup>2</sup> Luke 8:3

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 27:55

<sup>4</sup> Luke 23:55, 56

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:21-43, Luke 8:40-56

<sup>6</sup> Number 19:11-13

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 8:3, Mark 1:40, Luke 5:13

<sup>8</sup> Leviticus 20:10

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 15:24

<sup>10</sup> Leviticus 20:10

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 21:12, Leviticus 24:17

<sup>12</sup> Exodus 21:16

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 22:19, Leviticus 19:20,

<sup>14</sup> Exodus 21:15, 17

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 31:14-16

<sup>16</sup> Leviticus 24:16

<sup>17</sup> Leviticus 20:27

<sup>18</sup> Leviticus 20:2

<sup>19</sup> John 5:1-14

<sup>20</sup> Ezekiel 28:11-19

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 15:28

<sup>22</sup> Mark 3:21

<sup>23</sup> Deuteronomy 22:20, 21