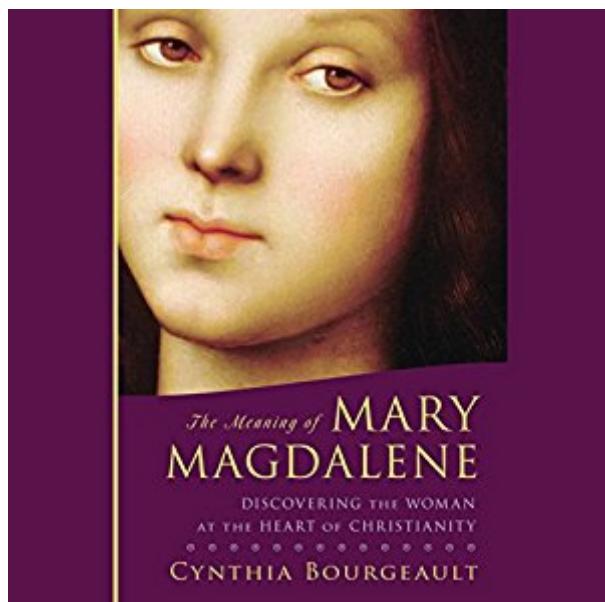


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# The Meaning Of Mary Magdalene: Discovering The Woman At The Heart Of Christianity



## **Synopsis**

Mary Magdalene is one of the most influential symbols in the history of Christianity - yet, if you look in the Bible, you'll find only a handful of verses that speak of her. How did she become such a compelling saint in the face of such paltry evidence? In her effort to answer that question, Cynthia Bourgeault examines the Bible, church tradition, art, legend, and newly discovered texts to see what's there. She then applies her own reasoning and intuition, informed by the wisdom of the ages-old Christian contemplative tradition. What emerges is a radical view of Mary Magdalene as Jesus' most important disciple, the one he considered to understand his teaching best. That teaching was characterized by a nondualistic approach to the world and by a deep understanding of the value of the feminine. Cynthia shows how an understanding of Mary Magdalene can revitalize contemporary Christianity, how Christians and others can, through her, find their way to Jesus' original teachings and apply them to their modern lives.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

First let me start out by saying, that this was not quite what I expected. I assumed it would be a scholarly biography of one of Christianity's most enigmatic women. It certainly is that. But I expected it to be along the lines of a general work using the accepted tools of hermeneutics in examining the texts of the Gospel accounts of the New Testament. That it was not quite, though it certainly examined all the pertinent texts thoroughly. However, much of Cynthia Bourgeault's work delves into the so-called "Gnostic Gospels" of Mary, Thomas, Peter and Philip. These were more or less

known to the powers that decided the canon, but were omitted largely because they spoke of a more transcendent and ephemeral Jesus and his teachings. They were "gnostic" and heretical, having lost the battle to the growing "orthodoxy" of the Roman Church. Rev. Bourgeault crafts with great care and precision her hypothesis that Jesus and Mary were "soul mates," certainly lovers, although she doesn't claim they were physical lovers, although she finds no reason why they may not have been. She finds in Jesus a Nazarite, much like John the Baptist, but one who gave up the ascetic life, the life of denial, to move to the path of "singleness" where kenotic love became the center of his being. This self-giving or self-emptying attitude was one that he taught Mary and it is what allowed them to transcend his death on the cross. Their unitive love, whether physical or celibate, enabled them to reach the fullness of being human. It is this towards what his teachings point. It is this message that Jesus sought to teach his disciples. It is what Mary learned, making her the foremost of all the disciples.

"The gospel narratives leave us with a powerful icon of the deep and pure soul love between Mary Magdalene and Jesus..a deep and mystical bond between them, stronger than physical life or death,(which) becomes profoundly engendering to the whole subsequent unfolding of Christianity" ( C. Bourgeault 2008 *The Wisdom Jesus*). Picking up themes from earlier work which are at the heart of her teaching and Thomas Keating's, and further exploring her own almost life long interest in Mary Magdalene, this book, takes us on a journey through an imaginal ( not the same as imagined) consideration of the relationship between Jesus and Mary. The Rev. Bourgeault takes us on a journey, informed by faith, experience and a sparkling intellect through an ages old consideration of the relationship between eros and agape. Before taking us on this journey with her, she first visits what we know of Mary in history referring to the bible as well as the gnostic gospels (but not the Pistis Sophia or the Jesus Sophia) and very logically in very human terms points to the evidence that the relationship was deeply personal, intimate and loving and that Mary most likely had her own spiritual gifts. Rev. Bourgeault tells us that the meaning of Mary is not as sophia incarnate, that the recovery of Magdalene is not a recovery of Sophia, the feminine divine. There is only one ordering principle,not a masculine and a feminine,she says with compelling clarity. The real meaning of Mary Magdalene to Christianity is in her human being..in her being the first Christian..the first to understand and model Jesus' transparency ( not as God but as Human (sic)) There is obviously much more experience, thought and revelation to be shared than could be accommodated in these few pages. There is no question that The Rev.

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