

Magdalena: Released From Shame stories

Colombia

Magdalena: Released From Shame premiered for an audience of 300 ministry workers in Colombia. Following this showing, one young woman observed: "... [One thing] that we women experience here in Colombia is that women have been devalued But in the movie, this really caught my attention. I could see the value, the transformation [of] the gospel and the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross and through that I think the movie can have a great impact on women who don't know Christ, and those that have been mistreated, even physically." Through tears, another woman said: "I was so touched by the movie because I feel that we women have been put down for a long time by many cultures, and to see how since the time of Jesus, women have had a leading role in evangelism and in the way they have served Jesus. This really touched me."

Each attendee received a copy of *Magdalena: Released From Shame* on DVD and committed to starting one women's small group based on the film. Praise God for how the film is building spiritual movements throughout Colombia!

Country #1

In one North African country, the national director met the manager of a cinema in a major city to discuss a possible premiere of *Magdalena: Released From Shame*. The manager, who initially told him he would have to pay a large sum of money to show the film in the theater, said he needed to get the owner's approval. The manager called the owner and asked, "Do you want to rent it to them?" The national director met with the owner, who responded with enthusiasm, saying, "It's a blessing for this film to be shown in this theater." As a result, the owner agreed to premiere the film for free!

Phoebe*, a local upper-class woman, attended this premiere of *Magdalena: Released From Shame*. Prior to the film, Phoebe had a violent argument with her husband during which he had beaten her. Despite the abuse, Phoebe was determined to keep her promise to a friend to attend the film premiere. After she watched the movie, she testified: "I came to this film, I was hurt, I was wounded, I was unappreciated. By watching this film, I was able to see how the prophet has honored the woman. He healed and uplifted her." Phoebe expressed interest in knowing more about Christianity and received a copy of the New Testament. After reading some of it and asking many questions, she told a ministry worker: "Please help me. I want to take the step to follow Jesus. I am fully convinced of it, but I need to take a step of faith." Praise God for Phoebe and many more women like her who are coming to faith because of this film!

Country #2

One Middle Eastern country hosted showings for more than 11,000 people and reported that 1,200 people indicated decisions to receive Christ after watching *Magdalena: Released From Shame*. The film has helped create unity among churches of different denominations. A group of nuns organized film showings in three women's prisons throughout the country.

At one showing organized by a local Catholic church leader, 800 women gathered to watch *Magdalena: Released From Shame*. One witness described visible, emotional reactions toward the film, saying “Whenever Jesus does a miracle, people would be laughing ... and during the crucifixion, people would be sad.” When the film ended, a priest in the audience came forward, asking that the film be rewound to the prayer to accept Christ. “Did you notice this prayer of consecration for Christ?” he asked. “Who prayed this prayer?” Several people raised their hands. The priest insisted, “I’m going to give them a second chance.” After watching the prayer a second time, many more people remained standing, indicating decisions to accept Jesus!

At another showing, one man and his wife came forward to share with the film team how much they loved the film. The man said that he and his wife especially identified with Mary Magdalene. The wife shared: “We feel like there are some demons in this family. They have given us [many] problems. Now that we see how Jesus is able to get those demons out, we think by bringing Jesus into our family, we would be safe and those demons would go away.” This couple stood and prayed in a circle with their children, asking Christ into their lives.

Country #3

On Easter Sunday, one Middle Eastern television station broadcasted an 80-minute feature of *Magdalena: Released From Shame*. A Catholic bishop, a well-known sheik and a film ministry leader were invited to participate in this seminar, which reached millions of viewers not only in the Arab world, but throughout Europe and South America as well. The program featured video clips from the film as these three religious leaders discussed the significance of the film, the controversy surrounding *The Da Vinci Code*, and the life, teachings, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Commenting on the viewers’ response to the program, one ministry leader said: “It was a miracle and many people called We praise Jesus that ... all the people [came to know] about Jesus Himself.” Another ministry leader remarked, “Praise the Lord for what is being done through this film!”

Country #4

Preparing to promote *Magdalena: Released From Shame* in one Middle Eastern country, the wife of the national director said, “We had a dream of putting posters over all the streets.” Although advertising is extremely costly, they trusted God to provide a way to promote the film. One ministry worker approached an advertising company, who initially agreed to display the film posters. After he consulted other government officials, they told him they were astounded that the advertising company agreed to show the posters, because only the director of the national advertising company had the authority to do so.

After much discussion and many phone calls, this advertising director agreed to post the *Magdalena: Released From Shame* advertisements on billboards tax-free, under one condition – that the company’s name be credited on all of the posters! “We wished something like this to happen. It gives us credibility,” said one film ministry worker. As a result, this endorsement by the ad company gave the ministry permission to hang billboard-sized posters throughout the capital city on busy street corners, next to the main university campus, and even on the wall of a local mosque! Praise God for providing this wonderful opportunity for advertisement, so that even “the picture of Jesus was on the wall of the mosque!”

Largely as a result of this free advertising campaign, more than 19,000 people attended *Magdalena: Released From Shame* showings throughout the country. Well-known journalist Stephen* attended a theater showing in the main capital city. Intrigued by Jesus, he sought out film team workers and expressed an interest in knowing more about Christ. One staff worker gave Stephen a copy of the New Testament to read and set up an appointment to meet with him. A few days later, he met with this staff worker for more than two hours, as he shared Christ with Stephen and answered his questions. On that day, he prayed to receive Christ as Savior! Later, he sent a message to the staff office, saying: "I know now that Jesus is my Savior. He set me free. Thank you that you saved me from suicide." Stephen had even determined a date, time and means to commit suicide, but later testified: "After I read the gospel, my mind opened. New thoughts, new life, new words that stopped me from that. I am now a new person." Stephen is a well-known journalist for a major satellite television network. Pray that he continues to grow in his newfound faith.

Country #5

Even the most hardened criminals responded to the film's message of redemption and forgiveness through Jesus. Nearly 350 inmates gathered to watch the movie in a women's prison in Central Asia. After watching the film, nearly 60 percent of these female inmates raised their hands, indicating decisions to accept Christ! Ministry workers gathered their contact information to ensure each woman would receive follow-up. One Central Asian ministry worker shared the story of a prisoner: "There was a woman who killed 42 people. And then she watched the film and she cried. God opened her heart. There are a thousand like her, millions like her, waiting for Jesus."

Country #6

Rain fell steadily throughout the day of the premiere, threatening to overshadow the scheduled showing of *Magdalena: Released From Shame* in one Middle Eastern country. Ministry leaders feared that rainy weather would prevent many people from coming to the premiere at this large public hall, so they prayed for the Lord to intervene. One hour before the film began, the rain stopped! As a result, more than 1,000 women and at least 250 children arrived to watch the film, free from the threat of rain. As the last woman entered the hall, the rain immediately resumed. However, as soon as the film ended, the rain also stopped!

Following the premiere, ministry leaders handed each woman a single red rose as a gift. Several audience members remarked on the quality and message of the film, saying "Christ gave women their esteem," and "He gave [the women] respect and value and forgiveness." One ministry leader observed: "Hundreds of women were crying during and after the show. The Holy Spirit was at work." The next day, newspapers reported on this premiere, amazed that 1,000 women gathered together in the same place. A Middle Eastern national remarked, "This is the first time such a thing [happened here]."

Country #7

In one Middle Eastern country, ministry workers distributed copies of the *Magdalena: Released From Shame* DVD as an insert in a popular women's magazine. As a result, they successfully distributed 40,000 copies in two months. The ministry also developed a Four Spiritual Laws pamphlet specifically for women, which featured scenes from the film. The ministry assembled packages of evangelistic materials which included these pamphlets, *Magdalena: Released From Shame* DVDs, and *The Story of Jesus for Children*. The national director said, "We can reach the whole family, not only women, but the family!" According to a recent report, Messianic Jews from a nearby region had the opportunity to share the film with 500 Sudanese refugees who fled the conflict in Darfur. Praise God for the many people who are hearing the gospel through this film!

Country #8

"*Magdalena* is a powerful and effective instrument in reaching the nation. We believe that in reaching every woman, we can reach the nation," declared one film ministry worker in Central Asia. The ministry here obtained permission to show *Magdalena: Released From Shame* in the largest movie theater in the country! As a means of obtaining contact information for follow-up, ministry teams hosted a free lottery for the premiere tickets. One of these lottery ticket recipients, Shalla*, invited her husband to attend the showing of *Magdalena: Released From Shame*. Although Teresa was already a believer, her husband forbade her from attending church. One ministry worker related the effect of the film on the husband: "After watching the movie, his attitude towards her was changed. Now she can freely go to church!"

Country #9

In one Middle Eastern country, 70 churches joined together and committed to show the film at least once. More than 17,000 people attended 90 showings during this spring campaign. The response was overwhelmingly positive. One viewer shared: "I was deeply touched by this movie. I felt God's love toward me as a woman so much.... He gave me something special and He gave me great value." Another woman remarked: "This film gave dignity to all the women. I was influenced by the adulteress. She was insulted by all others but Jesus gave her respect, forgiveness." Still another woman simply said, "I would love to know more about this Jesus."

One leader spoke of an unprecedented unity between evangelical, Latin and Catholic churches and the fruit it bore: "This is for the first time that such a thing happen[ed]. This shows that a lot of prayers [were] made for the film."

Country #10

In one Central Asian country, a believing woman named Lydia* approached the film ministry team for help. As head of a large factory in a diverse city center, she wanted to share the gospel with her employees, many of whom are women. With the assistance of a local film ministry team, Lydia held a showing of *Magdalena: Released From Shame* for more than 50 people. After the film, 17 women and two men prayed to receive Christ! "Now we have every Wednesday a Bible group for these people." Many of the factory workers are foreigners living in the area and feel a sense of hardship and alienation. This film helped create a sense of

community and belonging for them: “They felt the people paid attention to them,” confirmed one ministry worker. As a result of Lydia’s initiative, “Every week, they show *Magdalena* in this area. So it is our joy. Thank you.”

Country #11

Although designed primarily to reach women, *Magdalena: Released From Shame* has also helped to transform the lives and attitudes of men. In one Central Asian country, a woman had been a believer for two years. Often upset with his wife for her beliefs in Jesus, her husband continuously abused and beat her. One day her husband came home and discovered that neighbors had taken his wife to see the film. Angrily storming off to find his wife—certain that he would kill her—he arrived at the showing location, where more than 100 people had gathered to watch the film. After the film finished, this husband, who had stayed to watch it, was the first to respond to the invitation! He asked his wife for forgiveness, and she praised God that He had answered her prayers for her husband!

Country #12

One Central Asian film ministry hosted four camps for children and teenagers. Teaching the youth to pray and study the Bible, the ministry teams also hosted several days of showings of both *Magdalena: Released From Shame* and the *JESUS* film. The teams distributed gift bags of T-shirts, DVDs, audiocassettes and videos to the youth. Translating the Four Spiritual Laws into the local heart language, they also created special gifts for women complete with DVDs, audio CDs and assorted bath toiletries.

The film ministry leader explained: “When the kids would come with gifts, they shared [the] gospel with their relatives and parents and friends. They shared about what happened at the camp. Parents couldn’t recognize their kids because the kids would start praying in the home, and would say to the parents [that] it’s not right to drink and use drugs.” The teenagers also expressed an interest in attending church, and so ministry workers took them to a local church on a bus.

This film ministry leader described the results of the film showings at the camp: “Teenagers were changed instantly. Many of them looked like [those] in gangs, rockers. We didn’t tell them about what they should [be] or how they should act. We just read the Bible and prayed with them and showed the movie. So these kids started crying and taking away their earrings and started changing. And in the end of the camp, the kids didn’t want to go home, they wanted to stay together. They memorized verses from the Bible. There was one drug user and all his family were alcoholics and drug addicts, and he watched the film. He repented and he came to the church and he was a totally different person. He repented and said, ‘God, why couldn’t I find you for so many years? But praise You that I already came to You.’

* Name added or changed for security purposes