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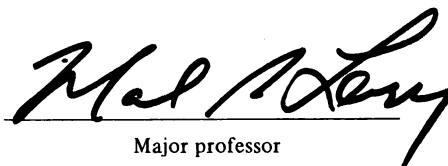
**MY FRIEND, MARY MAGDALENE**  
**- A PILOT PROGRAM OF "THE HOLY SISTERS:**  
**WOMEN IN THE GOSPEL STORIES"**

presented by

**YOUNG-MI JEON**

has been accepted towards fulfillment  
of the requirements for

MA degree in Telecommunication

  
Major professor

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MY FRIEND, MARY MAGDALENE  
- A PILOT PROGRAM OF "THE HOLY SISTERS:  
WOMEN IN THE GOSPEL STORIES"

By

Young-Mi Jeon

A THESIS

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **MY FRIEND MARY MAGDALENE - A PILOT PROGRAM OF "THE HOLY SISTERS: WOMEN IN THE GOSPEL STORIES"**

By

Young-Mi Jeon

This thesis is about a web site which tells the biblical story of Mary Magdalene. Its audience will be Korean-American Christian teenage girls. This project will recreate the story from the perspective of Mary on the basis of biblical studies and knowledge of contemporary teenage girls. This program will be designed specifically for them in its style and format. This project will be fun to read like a short novel, letting users feel and think as they want. Then users can share those feelings and thoughts using the internet technology. This program will be a pilot project of "Holy Sisters: Women in the Gospel Stories."

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## I. Purpose: A Feministic Theological Approach

Mary Magdalene has been described as an adulteress and repentant prostitute in numerous novels and movies until now. The predominant image of her is of a voluptuous woman with long golden hair, weeping for her sins, "the very incarnation of the age-old equation between feminine beauty, sexuality and sin."<sup>1</sup> However, this image has no biblical or historical foundation. All we truly know of her is from the four gospels which say Mary Magdalene was one of Christ's female followers, was present at Jesus' crucifixion, and was the first witness of his resurrection.

Discoveries of new texts from the dry sands of Egypt shed light on proven the true portrait of Mary. On the basis of her study of these texts, Karen King, professor of New Testament Studies and the History of Ancient Christianity at Harvard University, asserts that Mary Magdalene was indeed "an influential figure and leader of one wing of the early Christian movement that promoted women's leadership."<sup>2</sup> According to King, these writings elaborate the portrait of Mary as a favored disciple and her role as "an apostle to the

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<sup>1</sup> Haskins, Susan (1993), Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> King, Karen L., *Women in Ancient Christianity: The New Discoveries*, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/women.html>



apostles."<sup>3</sup>

Then, how and why had she become the Church's symbol of penance? Many scholars agree that the image of Mary Magdalene has been refashioned continuously to suit the needs of the times. Starting in the fourth century, Latin theologians associated Mary with the unnamed sinner who anointed Jesus' feet in Luke 7:36-50.<sup>4</sup> They confused the account in John 12:1-8, in which Mary (of Bethany) anoints Jesus, with the anointing by the unnamed sinner in the accounts of Luke. Once this erroneous identification was happened, Mary Magdalene could be every unnamed sinful woman in the Gospels, including the adulteress in John 8:1-11 and so on. Mary the apostle had become Mary the repentant whore. Elaine H. Pagels, professor of Religion at Princeton University, suspects there were Christians who were trying to challenge Mary's status among groups who saw her as a great one of the disciples.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout church history, despite the contributions and sacrifices of countless women, their roles and achievements have been underestimated and even forgotten. As the early Christian communities were institutionalized

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Pagels, Elaine H., *Women in the Early Church*,  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/roles.html>

starting around the second to the fourth century, women's leadership in ancient Christianity was eventually declared heretical, and evidence of women's early leadership roles was erased or suppressed. The same is true of the biblical stories of women. Though women had strong faith and significant roles in Jesus' ministry, their stories have been rarely told and, when told, have been treated as background stories for the stories of other male disciples. According to Elizabeth Clark, professor of Religion in Duke University, Paul's letters do not mention the women as witnesses to the resurrection whereas all the Gospels describe women as witnesses to the resurrection.<sup>6</sup>

Mary Magdalene has been misrepresented most among women in the Bible. Her story has been distorted and her true story lost, becoming part of what is now called the forgotten history of women. Haskins says that, if the “victimization” of Mary Magdalene can stand as a metaphor for the historically subordinate position of women in Christianity, now that the woman so long regarded as a penitent sinner has been shown in her true light, then it may be that Christianity's view of woman in history itself requires some kind of radical revision.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Clark, Elizabeth, *The Roles for Women*, in *From Jesus to Christ*, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/roles.html>

<sup>7</sup> Haskins, p. 386.



Fortunately, in the last twenty years, the history of women in ancient Christianity has been reconstructed by some enthusiastic theologians. They claim the true feminine model, according to the Gospels, which embodies strength, courage and independence, all feminine qualities which the Church has attempted to suppress by subordinating women to the restricted model it has created, the obedient virgin and mother.<sup>8</sup> The reconstructed picture will have greater relevance and resonance for women looking for active roles both within and outside the Church.<sup>9</sup> The true Mary Magdalene story has a different message when freed from the restrictions which centuries of gender bias has imposed upon her. The true Mary Magdalene, the disciple by the cross and herald of the resurrection, would be far more edifying as a figure of independence, courage, action, faith and love, and would serve women better as a symbol for today. To tell this modern story of ancient times, an interactive multimedia project will be created which represents Mary Magdalene as one of Jesus' faithful disciples with courage and love by telling her story again, coming out of the shadow and sharing her experience of life and of Jesus Christ. Teenage Girls will learn about her faith and courage and the love of God.

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<sup>8</sup> Haskins, p. 387.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 394.

## II. Audience: Korean American Christian Teenage Girls

### 1. General Understanding

Teenagers are the internet generation, the so called N-generation. They study and learn on the internet, find useful information through internet, enjoy games on computer. They chat with friends via internet. They spend enormous time with the computer everyday. The internet becomes inseparable from their lives. The internet is a great place for them to exchange and learn from each other and share their feelings and thoughts. So it is an effective medium to reach teenagers.

In terms of gender and computer use, much research indicates there is no difference in ability to use technology between girls and boys. But some people suggest there is a gender difference in playing pattern and preference. According to Janese Swanson, president of Girl Tech, girls tend to like depth and connection to people and information that helps them in their lives as a part of their play.<sup>10</sup> Girls do things differently with a computer but it's just as much joy for them to be able to use a program where they can create a greeting card and send it off to someone on the internet, as it is for a boy to shoot up an

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<sup>10</sup> Swanson, Janese, "Girl Tech's Mission," from Interview Excerpt in Digital Divide, (<http://www.pbs.org/digitaldivide/gender-voices.html>)



alien in space war game. According to this research, most girls do not like destroying something.<sup>11</sup>

Ernest Adams, interactive software developer, mentions that some computer games perpetuate old stereotypes about girls.<sup>12</sup> The early games for girls concentrated on clothing, make-up, hair and teen-age angst of various sorts.<sup>13</sup> The images of women portrayed in many games also need to be changed and improved. Computer game characters are one source of role model which contributes to who girls are and how they see the world. Therefore, to offer positive female role models through the internet or a computer game could provide positive alternatives for teenage girls.

Regarding physical development, teenage years are a time of explosive change as teens transition from childhood to adulthood. As their physical appearance changes dramatically, they get interested in sexual differences and continue to develop their attitude toward the other sex. They may be more prone to internalize a stereotyped sexual role or image more intensively than any other period. According to developmental psychologists, teenage years are

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Adams, Earnest, "Games for Girls," from Interview Excerpt in Digital Divide (<http://www.pbs.org/digitaldivide/gender-voices.html>)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

a time of great confusion, anticipation, anxiety, and vulnerability. This period is characterized by identity crisis. Teens are in need of acceptance, affirmation, and significance. Teens need self-affirmation to build self-esteem.

Especially teenage girls have unique problems of self-esteem. A nationwide research of teenage girls (1999) by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation shows that teenage girls are struggling to find their true identity in the face of the strange, pervasive, and narrow standard of women set by media. Many teenage girls reported that it is hard for them to find who they really are.<sup>14</sup>

In the church, female teen's self-esteem as women has also been oppressed by sexually discriminating interpretations of biblical passages. In fact, women pastors are still rare in churches, while most women serve churches in submissive roles. Teenage girls have heard lots of men's stories from the bible, while they may have heard of few women's stories. In addition, the stories they have heard have often been used to reinforce so called feminine virtues such as obedience, chastity, and submissiveness, repressing their feelings or sexuality. These teachings may influence girls' identity as being inferior to boys'. They might not dream to be a leader in their

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<sup>14</sup> Haag, Pamela, *Voices of a Generation* (NY; Marlow & Company, 2000), p. 15

congregations. This multimedia project shows teenage girls there are female role models in the bible, who dare to live and to follow Jesus as men did. Teenage girls could benefit from hearing stories about female leaders and ancestors in Christian tradition.

Outside churches, teenage girls also struggle with issues of dating, sexual relationship, and pregnancy. They seek for security, acceptance, and love.<sup>15</sup> Also, some girls report experiencing sexual harassment, rape/date rape.<sup>16</sup> Throughout the Christian tradition, punishment for sexual sins has been much more strictly applied to women than their male partners. Most churches still have negative attitudes toward female sexuality. Researcher, Pamela Haag, suggests that teenage girls need confidence in their sexual identity.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, some girls recall people belittling their ambitions, insulting their intelligence, or challenging their ability in general.<sup>18</sup> They often

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 37

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 103





hear, "She can't because she is a girl."<sup>19</sup> They need respect and affirmation of their abilities and decisions.

The survey also asked about what their definition of 'sisterhood' is. Teenage girls identified "sisterhood" as a consoling, comforting relationship which includes being there for other girls and helping them through tough situations.<sup>20</sup> A 14-year-old girl emphasized the leadership aspects of the bond: Sisterhood imposes a responsibility "to help out when girls or women need it, to guide and to lead into the future, to be at least a good role model to all women...."<sup>21</sup> This multimedia project will attempt to support sisterhood among teenage girls. They can send letters to women in the Gospel stories. They can share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Acknowledging the present situation, this program will provide a female faith role model, connecting contemporary teen issues of low self-esteem, identity crisis. As they reflect and share their experiences and thoughts, teenage girls today can form a sisterhood or friendship with ancient biblical women in their imagination.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.104

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 81

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p. 85

## 2. User Case : a Korean American Christian teenage girl, Esther

User case is a methodology for designing multimedia. The designer begins by researching target users, narrowing down to a specific hypothetical target individual. A brief history and personality are invented to help keep the user vividly in mind throughout the design process.

Esther is 17 years old. Her parents immigrated to the USA when she was 5. Her family is Christian. She is the youngest one in her family and has two elder brothers. Her parents expect her brothers to be a pastor and a lawyer respectively, while Esther is expected to be a good daughter and good wife in the future. They teach her to be obedient, polite, neat, and pretty. She feels boring and unsuitable. Though she likes pretty dolls and fancy things, she is also active and outgoing. She wants to be someone more than being a good wife. Her parents work at a laundry for every weekday. Both of them are conservative. So she finds it hard to talk to them about her problems. She wishes she had a sister.

At school, since she is a Korean-American, she looks different from others and feels like an alien among her peers. She has black hair and yellow skin. She is short and thin. She is smart and active. Sometimes she is afraid of being too smart for a girl. Her classmates sometimes mock her unpopularity

since she has no boyfriend. Though she is comfortable without a boyfriend, she feels pressure from peers. She is confused and struggles with her true identity and the meaning of her life. She grows curious about her Korean tradition. She is not good at computers. She doesn't like math and science. She likes to read novels and romantic cartoons. She likes to collect pretty cards and pictures.

Her family goes to church every Sunday. Her parents sing in a church choir. Esther and her brothers attend the Sunday School youth group. Esther has heard many biblical stories of faith ancestors, including Noah, Moses, Samuel, David, Peter, and Paul. She has rarely heard of female faith ancestors. She knows some women in the Bible, such as Ruth, Esther, and Mary. They seem old-fashioned and boring. Her bible teacher tells her the same thing as her parents, saying that women should be obedient and chaste. Whenever she reads biblical passages of women's subordination to men, she feels annoyed since she wants to be independent and does not think herself inferior to boys. She feels no interest in the church. She thinks the bible doesn't say anything about her problems.

### III. Communication Objective

The goals of this project are:

- to entertain teenage girls by telling an appealing story of Mary Magdalene
- to provide a female faith role model from the Bible
- to provide an aesthetically appealing technical experience on the internet.

The Communication objective of this project is to tell the new story of Mary Magdalene as a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

#### IV. Program Content

This project depicts Mary Magdalene as a positive female role model of the Christian faith, in her own decision and commitment to follow Jesus despite all the traditional barriers for women at that time, which deserved to be called a true disciple of Jesus. The image of Mary Magdalene is independent, active, open-minded, and also warm and caring. This story tells how Mary Magdalene met Jesus and how sincerely she followed Jesus with faith and love. She followed Jesus throughout his ministry, helping with all her means. She was the one who stayed with Jesus under the cross and finally became the first witness to Jesus' resurrection. According to research, she became a leader of one of the first Christian communities. This story is recreated on the basis of the insights from recent theological studies of the Gospels and research about contemporary teenage girls.

In addition, this program provides background information of the story and general information about women's everyday life during the biblical period. Considering the potential of the web site as a social medium, it provides an interface to share viewers' thoughts, and feelings about the program through internet. And they can write a message to a friend by sending an e-card.

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## V. Production and Presentation

\* Computer programs: Macromedia Flash 4, Macromedia Fireworks 2, Adobe Photoshop 5, Painter Classic, SoundApp PPC, SoundEdit 16 version 2.

This project is an interactive, multimedia web site using various programs described above, and includes the following dimensions.

### 1. Main Page

Its layout appears to be a movie screen. The dark blue background color is intended to be calming and mysterious mood. The menu image of Mary Magdalene is the same image shown in the last scene of her story, presenting her as faithful, joyful, and inviting. The title is faded in with little sparkling star animation to attract viewers' attention. Following this, the four star-shaped option buttons appear from the title one by one like falling stars. When viewers roll over a button, it explodes into many small stars with a circle of light. It is to surprise and to entertain viewers as they play with buttons. Also with the star explosion, the brief description of each option appears above Mary's left hand. Since the option titles, her story, behind-story, your story, and send story, are implicit, not explicit, they need some explanation to tell viewers clearly what each section contains. To meet that need, brief descriptions for the buttons



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appears. Also, the menu has a button to open an intro movie at the right lower corner of the screen.

## 2. Intro Movie

One of the distinguished feature of this intro movie is that viewers can choose to see or not to see it. If they want to see this movie, they can click the “Intro” button on the main page. This intro movie is created to stimulate viewers’ curiosity and imagination. The preloader message, “From a remote place and time, she is coming...,” sets the tense situation where an unknown woman is coming and she is about to reveal herself to the viewers. For some computers with low speed connections, viewers will see a special effect when they roll over the message. They can enjoy the effect of little stars are falling like snow. When the download of the intro movie is finished, a woman appears with music. A clock image moving backwards symbolizes the fact she is coming from the past. She is marching to us through dark and disgraceful history to speak out for herself. The sentence, “Who am I?” implies the common problem of self-identity which contemporary teenage girls also share. The following text animation, “People have called me a sinful woman. But I am a precious daughter of God.” conveys that a true self-identity comes from inside, not outside. This intro is intended to make viewers want to read the story of Mary Magdalene, and feel sympathy for her.

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### 3. Option Pages

Each option page will have the same menu bar and layout design for consistency so that viewers can go easily anywhere in the program whenever they want.

#### 1) Option 1: *Her Story*

This page includes the option title, Her Story, buttons to go to main and other pages. A wide screen is used to display the story. As this option page opens, a series of text animations is played automatically, starting with, "This story has been recreated on the basis of the Bible." This animation is created to entertain by showing an interesting technical experience for viewers. Right after finishing the animation, a different message replace the previous one, saying "The story has five parts. Click a thumbnail to enter her story world." Five thumbnail buttons already appear under the wide screen. As they roll over a thumbnail, viewers can see the title of each story segment on the screen.

Once a story segment is selected, the screen shows the text and image combination, scene by scene with background music to set mood. A different button set appears right under the screen to control the story movie. It has back and next buttons. If the movie reaches the last scene, the next button becomes



disabled automatically. Between the back and next buttons, there is a small status bar to indicate where a viewer is in the story segment. To choose another story segment, viewers can click the “Back to Stories” button to return to the first page of option 1. Each story segment has different background music to suit its content and mood. Music can be stopped or played by clicking the “Music On/Off” button. When “Back to Stories” is clicked, the music is also stopped.

The five story segments tell the story from the first-person perspective. This project lets Mary Magdalene tell her story, since her voice has been unheard. Throughout history most women could not have spoken in public. They could not express themselves explicitly. So this project brings Mary Magdalene to the front stage and lets her speak. The five story segments are the following:

\* Story 1: Nightmare

- This segment introduces the environment for the whole story of Mary Magdalene. It tells how Mary might have lived before her encounter with Jesus.

\* Story 2: Encounter

- It describes the situation of how Mary meets Jesus and her experience of the grace of God. She decides to follow Jesus after all.

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\* Story 3: Growing Love

- It depicts how Mary would work and live as one of Jesus' disciples.

\* Story 4: The Hill of Despair

- It tells the story of the last moments of Jesus on earth including the last meal, Jesus' arrest, trials and the cross, and Mary's desperation. This story shows how women followed Jesus sincerely until his death.

\* Story 5: Heavenly Calling

- Mary goes to Jesus' tomb and discovers the tomb empty. She cries and hears a voice. She meets the risen Jesus. Jesus asks her to be the first witness to his resurrection. Mary runs to tell the good news to others. The last scene tells the story after that saying "Being the first witness to the risen Jesus, Mary Magdalene became one of the leaders of the first Christian movement. Her love and faith have shown us that she was a true and prominent disciple of Jesus Christ after all."

2) Option 2: *Behind-Story*

This page provides the background information of the story of Mary Magdalene. As this page is opened, viewers can see a brief introduction of Mary, "Who is Mary Magdalene?" While reading this, viewers can see three

other options to know more about her: Biblical passages about her, Women in Jesus' Time, and Other Women in the Gospels. This information is intended to give better understanding of where Mary Magdalene and other women came from, and how they lived in general.

- \* Biblical passages about Her: Summaries of the biblical passages of Mary Magdalene and provides four text buttons to go read each Gospel passages where Mary Magdalene appears.

- \* Women in Jesus' Time: Tells about the social, cultural life of women in Israel when Mary Magdalene lived, including marriage. Viewers can see Mary Magdalene from a more realistic perspective.

- \* Other women in the Gospels : Introduces other women who are mentioned in the four Gospels among the many Galilean women who followed Jesus. This shows how women are an integrated and a significant part of Jesus' ministry.

### 3) Option 3: *Your Story*

This page provides an interactive form to post and to share viewers' opinions and experiences with one another. It asks three questions to encourage viewers to write;

Q1: Share your thoughts and feeling about the story of Mary Magdalene.

Q2: Share your story about how faith changes your life.

Q3: If you have a female faith role model, tell us who and why.

Viewers can choose to answer to any of these questions and to post their answers. When viewers click the button “View Stories,” they can see the list of stories posted by other viewers. Through this activity, viewers can hear other voices and opinions and become more aware of the significance of women in churches as well as in the Bible.

#### 4) Option 4: *Send Story* (Under Construction)

According to research, teenage girls enjoy sending cards through the internet since they are more relationship-oriented than boys are. Most images on the cards will be the portraits of Mary Magdalene or the highlights from the five story segments. Viewers can choose an image and can write their own personal messages for different occasions.

## VI. Timeline and Distribution

This project has been done according to the following schedule:

- May - June, 2000 : Proposal & Research
- July - August, 2000 : Character Development & Storyboard
- September, 2000 - March, 2001: Production
- April, 2001 - Post-production

This project will be distributed over the internet, making links to other Christian or feminist sites, submitting to search engines, and advertising through banners. Also it can be distributed through church youth groups, Christian education programs, and Christian middle and high schools.

## VII. Test with Users

### 1. Research Method: Focus Group

Two tests with users have been conducted. For the first test, informal feedback was gathered from seven teenage girls when the story was partly done to ask about teenager reactions to the story of Mary Magdalene. The researcher sent volunteer participants e-mails with the story files, asking their opinions about the story. The second test was the focus group at the end of the project to get feedback from the teenage girls about the entire project. Again, files were e-mailed to the girls in advance so they could explore the project prior to the focus group interview. This chapter will discuss the focus group research and its result.

In accord with Morgan's rules of thumb, this focus group project had 7 participants.<sup>22</sup> The participants were Korean American teenage girls among the students of youth groups of Lansing Korean United Methodist Church and Somang Korean Baptist Church. The age range of participants is from age 11 to age 18: one 11, two 14s, two 15s, one 16, and one 18. Since the participants include students under 18, the researcher asked for parents to grant

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<sup>22</sup> David L. Morgan, Focus Groups as Qualitative Research, p.24



permission by signing a consent form (See appendix A). Information was presented to enable teens to decide voluntarily whether or not to participate as a research subject.

After getting parental permissions, the researcher sent e-mails to the focus group with the URL of the project and questions, asking them exploring the web site in advance. The next day the focus group gathered at a classroom of Lansing Korean United Methodist Church. Since this classroom has one computer, the researcher presented the project, discussing each section of the project with the focus group. In other words, this project used a structured group approach to listen to concrete reactions of the participants. The researcher was the moderator and asked the structured questions for each part of the project. (See appendix B.)

The length of focus group interview was an hour. This discussion was recorded on a tape recorder. In writing the actual report of the results, the researcher tried to make a balance between the direct quotation of the participants without identification and the summarization of their discussions to convey the vivid interaction that happened in the focus groups.

## 2. Focus Group Report

In general, most participants have basic computer skills and knowledge. They often use the internet to find information and to chat with friends. All of them have heard of Mary Magdalene previously and some of them have a positive image of her, while others have a negative image like a prostitute as seen in many movies. This focus group has discussed each section of the project as well as about the project as a whole.

#### 1) About Main page

All of them agree that its design looks pleasing and inviting. Especially, they like the star exploding animated button with its descriptions. An 11 year-old said, "It's very charming. It looks like little shiny stars in the night sky." An 18 year-old mentioned that the design was simple and well organized. She also liked the roll-over effect, saying, "some designers use too elaborate roll-over and feedback that are too distracting. But these buttons have nice and soft feedback that feel more invited and warm." Another girl at the age of 14 said she liked the image of Mary Magdalene on the main page.

#### 2) About Intro movie

Most participants liked the design that viewers can choose the intro movie later instead of being forced to see the intro before getting to the main menu, except



one who has no preference. Among girls who were positive, a 16 year old girl said ,“I really hate those intro movies even if they are well done and entertaining. Right out of the bat, it forces me to watch something when I don’t have time to watch. It makes me feel like I have no control. In that sense I really love this idea giving the control back to the user.” Another girl agreed with her in saying, “it is very convenient for me to choose the intro movie in case I don’t want to see it.” In terms of the intro movie itself, they felt it was fresh and interesting. They felt a build up of some expectation and tension about an untold story.

### 3) About “Her Story” page

Q1: What did you feel or think of the story of Mary Magdalene?

A 16 year old girl said, “I felt her as a human-being whom you might know in the real world, rather than a far-off woman whom I can only read about in the bible. It really had a personal touch. It lets me improve my understanding of Mary.” A girl at the age of 14 said that she realized from the web site that Mary was the first person to see the risen Jesus. Another 14 year old girl mentioned that she felt that Mary was a really brave woman. A common reaction was that participants gained a better understanding of Mary Magdalene and became more interested in her.

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Q2: Is it easy to navigate the stories using the buttons?

Most of them said that it is easy and user-friendly. Also there were some suggestions. An 18 year old girl said, "...However the stars, navigation buttons were too small. I didn't realize for several minutes that they are clickable. It also had a status bar displaying where I was in terms of page length, but I would like to see things like page numbers."

Q3: Is the background music effective?

All the participants agreed that the background music sets the mood of the story. A 15 year old girl said, "I cannot imagine browsing this web site without the music!"

#### 4) About "Behind-Story" page

Q1: Is "Biblical passages of Her" helpful?

There were different reactions to this question. One of the pros said, "I really wanted to know where exactly she appears in the bible, and it was right there!" One whose age is 11 said that it's helpful. but somewhat difficult. On the other hand, a 14 year old girl said, "To be honest, I didn't read all the bible passages about her. It was little bit boring..."

Q2: What did you learn from "Other Women in the Gospels" ?



All the girls seemed to be encouraged by the fact that there were many women who followed Jesus. An 18 year old girl said, "I felt that the women were an integral part of Jesus' life rather than just back drops." A 14 year old girl said that "I became aware that there were many great women as well as Mary Magdalene." An 11 year old said that she was a great woman who followed Jesus sincerely until Jesus' death. Another 14 year old girl said, "I like the fact that more women were Jesus' disciples than we knew." Another 14 year old girl agreed by saying, "Women were great! I became aware of that there were many women who followed Jesus."

Q3: What did you learn from "Women in Jesus' time"?

As a result, all the participants became more aware of the situation of women in Jesus' time. A 16 year old girl said, "it gave me a sense of how women were mistreated at that time. It helped to better understand Mary as a real person." A 14 year old girl said, "I felt angry about the unfair situation where women in Jesus' time lived. Also, I felt sympathy for these women as a woman."

5) About "Your Story" page

Most participants said that this page was easy to use. An 18 year old girl said, "I especially like features on a web site where a person can voice his or her



own opinion.” Regarding the three questions written on this page, participants thought these questions were appropriate for the theme of this project.

## 6) Overall Evaluation

Q1: What is your overall impression of the design of this project?

Participants agreed that the design of this project was fresh and attractive. A 15 year old girl said, “It’s fresh. Animations are very pretty and eye-catching.”

Q2: Is this site helpful for your faith?

Most participants think of Mary Magdalene as their faith role model for her faith and courage. A 14 year old girl mentioned, “I think she was a great woman who was very faithful and courageous.” Another 14 year old girl said, “I want to be more faithful like Mary who followed Jesus even after other disciples ran away.” On the other hand, an 18 year old girl mentioned, “In-depth information about a person who is rarely talked about helped me to have better understanding of the Bible. We only hear stories about Paul and Peter or other men in the Bible, but we seldom hear about women. We should have more web sites and other media programs like this one.” An 11 year old girl said, “the image of God she(Mary) had was so big like the sea, I think.” Another 14 year old girl said that she felt more friendly about the bible after reading the

story of Mary Magdalene.

Q3: Are you more interested in women in the bible after viewing this site?

This site has stimulated participants' interest in women in the bible. An 18 year old girl said, "it made me want to read the Bible once again to find more about these women. I will look at them in a whole new way." A 14 year old girl said, "Yes. I want to read more about women in the Bible. It reminds me of the story of Deborah in Judges. So I decided to read Judges to know more about her."

Q4: Is it easy or difficult to navigate around this web site? Please cite where you found difficult or confusing.

Generally speaking, it has been easy for the participants to navigate this site. But some of them pointed out drawbacks of the navigation. A 14 year old girl said, "the buttons were simple and easy to use. However, I often got lost. It didn't give me a status bar or any other feature displaying exactly where I was." An 11 year old girl also pointed out that the arrows as buttons were too small. Another 14 year old girl said that she felt uncomfortable because she could not use browser back button to navigate this site since the whole site was a Flash movie.

Q5: Which part do you like or appreciate most?



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Most participants mentioned that they really enjoyed the story of Mary Magdalene and the pictures. A 15 year old girl said, "I like the story of Mary Magdalene because it elaborates her life and faith in detail. Also the story is fun to read. I really enjoyed it." A 11 year old said that she liked the beautiful pictures in her story most. On the other hand, an 18 year old girl said that her favorite part was the message board where she could share her thoughts and opinion. Also the same girl said that she really like the idea of seeing the main page first and viewing the intro movie later at the user's leisure.

Q6: Which part should be added or improved?

Most of participants were satisfied with this site and there were few suggestions for its improvement. One girl just suggested that she wanted to see bigger pictures to fill empty space of the screen.

Q7: After exploring this site, do you feel more friendly in using computer?

All the participants agreed that they felt more friendly about computer after viewing this web site. A 18 year old said, "I always thought of the Internet as an information-gathering tool rather than an educational one. I really didn't like the traditional web sites that are text-based, like an encyclopedia. This site was a nice mix of educational information and entertainment. The user-friendly environment and mixed animation and text information kept me entertained."

In sum, most participants have enjoyed the story of Mary Magdalene and the pictures. They thought that its navigation design was easy and simple. Especially, they appreciated that the intro movie could be seen at viewers' discretion and the message board provided a space to share their opinions. Also, there have been some suggestions about navigation and the size of the screen.



## VIII . Reflections and Future Work

In this chapter, I would like to discuss what I have learned along the way creating the project. First, I will describe three big challenges that I have encountered throughout the production process. Second, I will conclude the thesis by mentioning three lessons for my future work on the basis of this project experience.

### 1. Encountered Challenges

#### 1) Production Timeline: Vision vs. Reality

This project originally intended to create seven women's stories in the Gospels. As time passed, it was reduced into four women and then three women. Finally I decided to choose only one woman, Mary Magdalene, among them. It became a pilot program of the project that I originally planned. Through this process, I realized that I did have an ambitious vision but didn't have any realistic sense of production time to achieve it. In fact, even in developing the story of one woman, I have spent about six months just drawing pictures for the story. By choosing one person, I could concentrate on developing her story in detail and its design as a whole. Focusing on one story was one of main factors to allow me finish this project successfully within the time limit.



## 2) User case : General vs. Specific

I thought that targeting a more general audience would be better to reach out to more people. At first my audience was women from age 11 to college students. It was shrunk to teenage girls and then Christian teenage girls. I read several academic books about teenagers and teenage girls. Also, I looked up teen magazines to understand their culture. After that, my final target audience became focused on a korean-american Christian girl, Esther. If I focused on her from the beginning, I would not have to spend so much time to research on the whole group of teens.

Also, I was afraid that the project would be biased if I chose a specific user case. I could not trust my singular imaginary target audience. How could she represent other korean-american Christian teenage girls? But I tried to follow this professional convention. As I worked, I found that it was the narrow way to touch a truth of the group. A user case became a small door to enter their world. Otherwise, I could not probe down to their world sincerely and deeply. My experience confirmed that the more specific my user case is, the more I can be professional and successful in my design.

## 3) Usability: Artistic vs. Practical

One of the big challenges I faced was viewers' reactions which were different from my expectation. As I worked, I asked several teenage girls about the design and use of buttons. I had tried to design a button which looked good and was suitable for the whole screen design. That was my priority. But when I asked girls, they did not appreciate my concern and wanted more practical functionality. So I had to change the whole button designs and functions several times throughout the production process.

## 2. Future work

This project is developed as a pilot program of "Holy Sisters: Women in the Gospels." In this sense, I have learned a lot from working on this pilot project for the future project. First, I will be more realistic in planning and producing a project. I will carefully calculate and organize the production timeline on the basis of this experience. Second, I spent lots of time doing research about a general audience. Next time, I will try to focus a specific user case from the beginning. Third, I will open my ears and hearts to potential viewers throughout the production process. I need to compromise my personal design preferences with the viewpoint of usability and preference by the viewers.



## APPENDICES

A. Consent Form

B. Focus Group Questions

## APPENDIX A Consent Form

This project involves the development of a web site to tell the stories of women in the Gospels to Korean-American Christian teenage girls. This web site of the story of Mary Magdalene is a pilot program of the original project. It aims to provide a female faith role model to users, presenting the story using new technology of the internet.

You are only being asked to participate in discussion about this program. This single session will last approximately one hour. During this session you will be asked some questions about the content, functionality, and navigation of this web site. You will not be involved with any risk of physical injury during your participation in this study.

You are being asked to freely participate in this study. Participation is voluntary and you can elect not to participate in this study. At any time during this study, you may discontinue your participation. You will not be penalized or lose benefits if you refuse to participate or decide to withdraw.

Your comments will be helpful for project improvement. The discussion will be tape recorded and all results from this study will be treated with strict confidence. This means that your name will not be associated with the answers you provide to questions in any report. Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, please contact the researcher Youngmi Jeon (jeonyoun@msu.edu). If you have questions about your rights as participants in research testing, you may contact David E. Wright, Ph.D., Chair of the University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects at 517-355-2180 or ucrihs@msu.edu

Please indicate your voluntary agreement to participate in this research by signing this consent form.

(If you are under the age of 18)

Parent Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Youngmi Jeon

Telecommunication Dept.  
Michigan State University

## APPENDIX B Focus Group Questions

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Part I: Before exploring the project, My Friend Mary Magdalene, please answer the following questions.

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1. Age:

2. Sex:

3. Religion:

4. General Computer skills:

☐ no interest

☐ afraid and barely use it

☐ can use basic functions

☐ use and explore various programs

☐ develop home pages using various programs

5. Internet uses (Please write numbers in order from most to least):

☐ never

☐ use for information

☐ use for fun

☐ use for game

☐ use for chat

other (describe it) \_\_\_\_\_

6. Have you heard of Mary Magdalene from churches or other media?

Yes ( ) / No ( )

if yes, what do you know about her? Please describe her image you have?

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Part II: After viewing the web site, please answer the following questions.

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\* About Main page

1. Your first impression

2. What do you think of button design and navigation?

\* About Intro movie

1. Does it make you expect something in terms of her story?

2. What is your feeling of this movie?

\* About Her Story page

1. What do you feel or learn about the story of Mary Magdalene?
2. Were you surprised to read that Mary Magdalene was an important disciple of Jesus?
3. Do you think Mary is at all like you? Is she someone you would like to be like?

\* About Behind-Story page

1. Are the biblical passages of Mary Magdalene helpful?
2. What do think of other women in the Gospel stories?
3. What did you learn about life for women during the time Mary was alive?

\* About Your Story page

1. Was it easy and convenient to use the form? If not, how should it be improved?
2. Are the three questions appropriate? Is there a question you might want to add?

\* Overall evaluation

1. What is your overall impression of the design of this project?
2. Does this story challenge your faith?
3. Does it inspire you to read or study other women in the Bible in the future?
4. Is it easy or difficult to navigate around this web site? Please cite where you found difficult or confusing.
5. Which part do you like or appreciate most?
6. Which part should be added or improved?
7. After exploring this site, do you feel more friendly in using computer?

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