

## Mary: The Woman Honored Above All Women

*Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water?  
 Mary, did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?  
 Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?  
 The child that you've delivered will soon deliver you?  
 Mary, did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?  
 Mary, did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with His hand?  
 Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?  
 When you kiss your little baby you've kissed the face of God.  
 The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again.  
 The lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the Lamb!  
 Mary, did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?  
 Mary, did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?  
 Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect lamb?  
 This sleeping child you're holding is the Great I Am.*  
 ~Mark Lowry

*And Mary said:  
 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 bondservant; for behold, from this time on all  
 generations will count me blessed.  
 For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name.  
 And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him.  
 He has done mighty deeds with His arm; he has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their  
 heart.  
 He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humbled.  
 He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed.  
 He has given help to Israel His servant, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to  
 Abraham and his offspring forever.*  
 ~Luke 1:46-55, The Magnificat

<b>Her names</b>	Her name May Mean "Bitterness".
<b>Key Scriptures</b>	Matthew 1:18-25, 2, Luke 1:26-80, 2, John 19:25-27
<b>Promises In Scripture</b>	Joshua 4:23-24, Matthew 19:26, I Corinthians 1:25

<b>Her Background, Life and Times</b>	
<b>Angels:</b>	Mary cowered in fear when the angel Gabriel appeared to her - not an uncommon reaction. Most often in Scripture, when an angel appeared to a human being, the reaction was one of fright. While we're not told exactly what angels look like or how they appear, one description in Matthew says the angel's "appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow" (Matthew 28:3). Certainly it's obvious from the reactions of those who saw them that angels are supernatural beings and therefore frightening. The 291 references to angels in Scripture give us a varied picture of the duties of angels. Angels in heaven stand before God's throne and worship him (Matthew 18:10).
<b>Family Connections:</b>	Mary was a humble village woman who lived in a small town, a place so insignificant as to lead Nathaniel to say, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Mary was of the tribe of Judah, and the line of David. In the royal genealogy of Matthew, and the human genealogy of Luke, Mary is only mentioned in the former, but her immediate forebears were not mentioned. She became the wife of Joseph, the son of Heli (Luke 3:23). Apart from Jesus, called her "firstborn", a term implying that other children followed after the order of natural generation (Luke 2:7). Later, Mary was married to Joseph the carpenter and she bore him four sons and several daughters, the former being - James, Joses, Judas and Simon, and the daughters unnamed (Matthew 13:55,56; Mark 6:3) During His ministry, none of His brothers believed in Him. In fact, they sneered at Him, and once concluded that

<p>He was mad, and wished to arrest Him and take Him away from Capernaum (Mark 3:21,31; John 7:3-5) But as the result of His death and Resurrection, His brothers became believers, and were among the number gathered in the Upper Room before Pentecost. None of His brothers were an apostle during His lifetime (Acts 1:13-14). (2)</p>
<p><b>Israel:</b> For long years her people had waited with earnest expectation for Israel's Deliverer. In Mary's day the Jewish people were caught between two millstones, the Roman government that pressed, yoke-like, upon farmers and artisan alike, and the scribes and doctors of the law who enforced their ritual and law to the letter, demanding the tithe even from the hungry. There was more fear of the law of the Rabbis than true worship of God in Galilee. There were many strangers within the gates who had no fear of God at all. It was a time of oppression and sin. Even the Holy City and the sacred temple were corrupt. (3)</p>
<p><b>Genealogy:</b> Most interpreters say that Matthew's genealogy is that of Joseph and Luke's that of Mary. (3)</p>
<p><b>Betrothal:</b> When we first meet Mary she is engaged to Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth. Joseph, devout and kind, was thought to be considerable older than Mary who was, perhaps, eighteen or twenty years old at this time. After appropriate formalities of presenting the coin from the groom to the bride; the dowry stipulated; the signing of the betrothal papers (as binding as marriage); choosing the two groomsmen - one for the bride and one for the groom - the betrothal of the happy pair was celebrated by feasting with friends and relatives. After this a period of waiting ensued. (3)</p> <p><b>Mary's marital status:</b> (Luke 1:27) The Greek specifically states Mary was a <i>parthenos</i>, a virgin. She was bound by a legally binding marriage contract to wed Joseph when she came of age. While sexual intercourse was not permitted in this relationship, Mary was still "wed" to Joseph. (Matthew 1:18) The Jewish "engagement" indicated her by <i>mnesteuno</i> was more binding than ours; it was a formal stage in contracting a marriage. The breaking of the marriage contract, even at this stage, was considered a divorce and would imply adultery. (8)</p> <p><b>Engagement:</b> Espousal among the Hebrews was something more than what a mere marriage engagement is with us. It was considered the beginning of marriage, was as legally binding as marriage itself, and could not be broken off save by a bill of divorce. Hence we find that Joseph is called the "husband" of Mary (Matt 1:19). The betrothal was usually determined by the parents or brothers of the parties, and the engagement was made between a friend or legal representative of the bridegroom and the father of the bride. The espousals were made very early in life, though marriage did not take place before the bride was twelve years old. Even when the age was suitable, the marriage was not consummated for some time after the betrothal. (Judges 14:8). At least a year, or sometimes more, elapsed between the betrothal and the marriage of a maiden, to give time for preparing her outfit. In case of a widow marriage might take place thirty days after espousal. The betrothal was usually accompanied by a feast in the house of the bride. The engagement, to be binding, must be either by written contract, or by the reception of presents by the bride from the bridegroom. When Abraham's servant received the consent of Rebekah's father and brother to make her the wife of his master's son, he presented to the maiden valuable gifts. (Genesis 24:53). The reception of these made the contract binding. The bride remained at her father's house until the time of marriage, when the bridegroom came after her. This custom is referred to in Deuteronomy 20:7. Meanwhile communication between her and the bridegroom was kept up by means of the "friend of the bridegroom" (10)</p>
<p><b>The Magnificat:</b> (Luke 1:46-56) Some question whether a young, uneducated country girl could have composed this magnificent prophetic power. Yet Mary might have been well acquainted with the O.T. passages alluded to from worship in the synagogue and talk in her home. Mary undoubtedly thought deeply on the angel's visit and may have composed her psalm over a period of weeks, guided by the Spirit who spoke through her. Her praise poem has four distinct parts: (1) personal adoration and thanks (v. 46-48); (2) celebration of God's attributes (v. 49-50); (3) acclaim for correcting injustice (v. 51-53); and (4) praise for the mercy shown Israel (v. 54-56) (8)</p>
<p><b>The date of Jesus' birth:</b> Luke 2:1-3) The census was an enrollment of citizens required as a basis for calculating taxes. Quirinius was imperial legate for Syria in A.D. 6, but this may have been his second time in office. Besides, Luke speaks of the census that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem as a <i>prote</i> (which probably means "earlier" here rather than "first"). So the year of Christ's birth continues to be debated. (8)</p>
<p><b>Why Shepherds?:</b> Shepherds in the 1<sup>st</sup> century were of very low social status. How appropriate to announce the Good News first to ordinary folds, rather than the rich and famous. (8)</p>
<p><b>Childbirth law:</b> (Luke 2:21-24) Leviticus 12:1-5 calls for a mother to offer a sacrifice for ritual purification after the birth of a child. It was fulfilling this requirement of O.T. Law that brought the family to the temple. (8)</p>
<p><b>King Herod:</b> Herod the Great was near death at the time the magi visited. Yet this paranoid man, who executed</p>

several of his own sons on suspicion that they planned to overthrow him, was so jealous of his power that he determined to murder an infant who surely could never come to the throne till long after Herod's own death. (8)

**Magi:** Originally the term *magoi* was applied to a class of scholars, wise men, and magicians who served as advisers to Persian rulers. It's not clear just what the term meant in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, although it is applied both to these authentic wise men and the charlatans described in Acts 8:9 and 13:6-8. (8)

**Magi:** These "wise men" or more properly *maji*, belonged to a numerous and influential order of men. The origin of Magism is involved in obscurity. It is thought to have had its beginning among either the Chaldeans or the Assyrians; more probably among the former. Starting in Chaldea, it would naturally make its way to Assyria, Media, and the adjoining countries. From Media it was brought into Persia, where it exerted a powerful influence in modifying the ancient religious faith of the people. Some profess to trace the magian doctrines to Abraham, who, it is said, if he did not originate them, at least purified them from the errors of Zabaism. After Abraham's time they became corrupted, and were again purified by Zoroaster, who is supposed to have been a descendant of the prophet Daniel. The Magians were a priestly caste, and the office is supposed to have been hereditary. They uttered prophecies, explained omens, interpreted dreams, and practiced divination by rods. In Persia they became a powerful body under the guide of Zoroaster, and were divided into three classes: *Herbeds*, or disciples; *Mobeds*, or masters; and *Destur-mobeds*, or perfect masters. After a time the term Magi became more extended in its meaning. As the Magi were men of learning, devoting special attention to astronomy and the natural sciences, it happened that, after the lapse of years, men who became celebrated for learning were called Magi, whether belonging to the priestly order or not. So, as the Magi joined to the pursuits of science the arts of the soothsayer, in process of time mere conjurers who had no scientific knowledge were called Magi. Simon Magus (Acts 8:9) and Bar-Jesus or Elymas (Acts 13:6,8) were men of this sort. The Magi who came to visit the infant Savior were no doubt of the better class. The idea, however, that they were kings and three in number is mere imagination, and unsusceptible of proof. They were evidently skilled in astronomical knowledge, and were earnest seekers after the newborn king. Where they came from is a disputed question. Various writers have suggested that they were Babylonians, Arabians, Persians, Bactrius, Parthians, or even Brahmans from India. Matthew says they were from "the East". Which was a geographical term of very elastic meaning. (10)

**The Star:** It is uncertain whether the star was a supernova, a comet, a conjunction of planets, or a totally supernatural apparition, as may be implied in Matthew 2:9. It is clear the magi and Matthew recognize it as the fulfillment of Numbers 24:17. The large Jewish community in "the east" developed a major body of O.T. interpretation. (8)

**Joseph:** Joseph must have felt betrayed when Mary was discovered to be pregnant. Even so he was willing to protect her by arranging a private divorce (before just two witness, Numbers 5:11-13). The comment, "a righteous man" (Matthew 1:19), reminds us that righteousness is not stern insistence on the letter of the law, but is well flavored with mercy and compassion.. Matthew 1 and 2 present Joseph as an admirable man. He was compassionate and concerned, even with the thought Mary had betrayed her commitment to him. We also see him obedient, even when marriage to Mary might impugn his character, for it would imply he was the father of her child. He was also consistently responsive to God's guidance, following God's lead immediately whenever guidance was given. We know little about Joseph beyond what we see here. But clearly he was a godly man, whose character reflected God's own. (8)

## Her Character

**Great Faith:** She was a virgin from a poor family in an obscure village in Galilee. Her response to Gabriel reveals a young woman of unusual faith and humility. Her unqualified yes to God's plan for her life entailed great personal risk and suffering. She must have endured seasons of confusion, fear, and darkness as the events of her life unfolded. She is honored, not only as the mother of Jesus, but as his first disciple. (1)

**Super-eminence:** "Blessed art thou among women" (Luke 1:28) While we have no word as to her beauty or pedigree, we know that she was poor. Yet in the Bible and outside of it she came to occupy the highest place among women. We cannot fail to be impressed with her character even though we are not told more than we have in sacred history. "Highly favored of the Lord" and having "found favor with him" (Luke 1:28,30) surely gives her a pedestal all her own. Mary belongs to those grand majestic females inspired with the spirit of prophecy, who is capable of influencing those who become rulers of men and also the destiny of nations. (2)

**Sanctity:** When Gabriel announced to the virgin whose name was Mary that she was to bring forth a Son to be called Jesus, he recognized her spiritual fitness for such an honor when he said, "The Lord is with thee" (Luke 1:28). Mary exhibited a true and genuine piety, as well as a profound humility - the accompaniment of holiness. As we read the

narrative given by Luke, to whom, as a physician, Mary could speak intimately of her profound experience, we are impressed with her quietness of spirit, meditative inwardness of disposition, admirable self-control, devout and gracious gift of sacred silence, and a mind saturated with the spirit and promises of the Old Testament. (2)
<b>Submission:</b> What amazes one about the Annunciation is the way Mary received it. She was in no way credulous or skeptical. Certainly she asked intelligent questions of Gabriel as to how she could become the mother of Jesus, seeing she was a pure virgin.
<b>Courageous:</b> She heard the blasphemies and revilings of the priests and the people, and saw the lights go out - but her faith did not die. If Calvary was our Lord's crown of sorrow, it was likewise Mary's, yet how courageous she was. Others might <i>sit</i> and watch the suffering Christ, or smite their breasts and cry, but "Mary <i>stood</i> by the cross." No Spartan mother ever displayed such fortitude as Mary manifested at the cross. How impressed we are with valor of Mary, as the sword pierces her heart again "now that which she brought forth was dying"! (2)
<b>Mary:</b> Among all the women of sacred history Mary is unique. She is unique not because she is holy but because she is the mother of the Great Son. She was one of us - often anxious, troubled, pained, tired and sad. She drank deeply of most exquisite joy but also tasted as great sorrow as a life can hold. Her son was a man of sorrows, well acquainted with grief; and men hid as it were their faces from Him, and Mary witnessed it all. (3)
<b>Noble:</b> Such complete resignation and surrender of the heart to God makes Mary, by God's grace, a truly noble woman. With the visit of the angel to Mary, the most divine and merciful idea ever conceived in eternity was actualized, bringing the era of light, peace and good will to men of all peoples forever. (3)
<b>John:</b> Jesus gave His precious mother into the care of His beloved disciple when He said, "Woman, behold thy son," and to John, "Son, behold thy mother." Mary, the mother who gave the Son of man life, became a woman for whom Christ died, that she might evermore be with Him in glory. (3)
<b>Conscientious Mother:</b> The trials of Mary matured her early. She was a conscientious mother, one who felt the presence and power of the living God, one who could speak of His mercies and who had faith in His promises. (3)
<b>Chaste Virgin:</b> Isaiah 7:14, The prophet Isaiah stated that God's Son would be born of a virgin. (7)
<b>Perplexed:</b> Jesus spent eighteen years, called the hidden years at home with his mother. Was the role of Jesus merely that of an exemplary son? Were great things still awaiting? Moreover, when Jesus finally began his ministry, he was baptized in the Jordan by John, whose teaching the venerable Rabbis questioned. (3)
<b>Humble Maiden:</b> Hailing from the village of Nazareth, Mary was a small-town girl, not a princess from a powerful nation or a sophisticated city girl from the best of society. (7)
<b>Devoted Follower:</b> God always looks at the heart, not the outward appearance (I Samuel 16:7). When He looked at dear Mary, He found in her a woman after His own heart, a woman who would live according to His will (Acts 13:22) (7)
<b>Immaculate Conception:</b> If it was possible for Mary to be born unpolluted from sinful parents, why, by the same reasoning, should it not have been possible for the Christ? However, a far weightier argument must be advanced against this doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. If that doctrine were true, the work of salvation would be quite superfluous. If it were possible for Mary to be born immaculate and to remain sinless throughout life because of grace, then the same ends could have been accomplished for all men immediately after the fall by that same grace. Then sin would at once have become a non-entity, and the mediator's coming would have been entirely unnecessary. For us, therefore, the lowliness of Mary retains a dual significance. She occupied a low estate to illustrate how a princess from the house of David had fallen from her high position. And she served to illustrate, besides, how the whole race had fallen from its high place in Paradise to the lower planes of sin and guilt. (17)
<b>Faithful Jew:</b> Of the tribe of Judah and the line of David, Mary worshipped the one true God and apparently did so in spirit and truth (John 4:24). Only such a woman would qualify for God's important assignment. (7)
<b>Her Faith:</b> The undue religious exaltation of the Mother of the Lord is based, primarily, upon her faith, and upon her faith conceived of as a personal accomplishment. The faith to which Mary gave expression has not always been thought of as having been freely given her by grace. It is thought by some that Mary partly accomplished it herself. Wherever this conception prevails, these corollaries follow: The incarnation of the Lord was made possible only by Mary's assent; by making that incarnation possible, Mary enabled Christ to offer the supreme sacrifice of redemption; and that for these reasons, Mary is partly to be praised for the redemption of the world, and for the forgiveness of our sins by the blood of the Lamb. (17)
<b>Virgin:</b> Mary's virginity is sometimes referred to as another of her exceptional virtues. But the Scriptures give us no reason to believe that she remained a virgin. There is no text which informs us that Mary's giving birth to her Child

left her maidenhood untrammelled. It will never be conclusively determined whether or not she did bear other children. It cannot be proved from the example of Mary that God prefers a virgin to a mother. (17)

**Spiritual:** No matter how highly we esteem Mary as the Mother of the Lord and as the Chosen One of God, it can never be demonstrated from the Scriptures that she was an extraordinarily spiritual woman. (17)

**Jesus:** I started with a bunch of questions. Questions I'd been pondering since I was a kid. They were sparked by a comment I heard my mother make many years ago: "If anyone knew Jesus was virgin-born - *Mary* knew. And no one could take that away from her." Mary knew. And as Jesus grew up and the Father revealed so many things to Him - could He have used Mary to do some of the revealing? I think so. Can you imagine the bedtime stories Mary must've told Jesus? Stories of stars, stables, and singing angels. Stories of shepherds and wise men from afar. Stories of prophets and priests and promises.

Can you imagine? She had been chosen to deliver God into the world. To nurse Him. To love Him. To protect Him. And, like every mother, to teach Him. She taught God how to walk. She taught Him how to talk. She changed God's diapers. She was chosen by God to raise the Son of God. And she watched Jesus grow in favor with God and man. But how much did she know? Did she know about Gethsemane? Did she know about the cross? Did she know there would be a resurrection?

There was no one she could turn to for advice. She couldn't go to her mother and ask, "Mom, what was it like when you had your first virgin-born son?" No one had ever been down that road before. This was a first...and a last.

But what was it like raising God's Son? Did He ever skin His knees? Did He ever wrestle with His little brothers? What subject in school was His best? Did He ever take a fish and feed the neighborhood? Did Mary ever seem Him embarrassed? Did she ever have to make Him get a haircut? Did He have a hero? Did He have a girlfriend? Was He a tenor or a bass? Did He laugh a lot? Was He ever moody? Did He ever have a weight problem? Was He ever homesick?

I couldn't get all these questions in the song. And I'll never really have the answers until I get to heaven and ask Mary for myself. Many of these questions probably don't deserve an answer anyway. But I picked a few of my favorites and put them down on paper. I kept this lyric in my briefcase for several years, trying to get a composer to put music to it. One weekend, while traveling on the Gaithers' bus, I handed it to Buddy Greene and asked if he would give it a try. He called me the following Monday and sang "Mary, Did You Know?" to me over the phone. I liked it. ~Mark Lowry (18)

## Her Sorrow

**Her Son's Death:** To see the son she loved shamed and tortured, left to die like the worst kind of criminal. (1)

**Her Son's Life:** When Mary brought her infant Son to be dedicated in the Temple, the aged, godly Simeon, taking the Babe in his arms and blessing Him, said to His mother, "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." Mary was to experience darkness, as well as delight, as her "first-born" went out to fulfill His mission in the world. (2)

**The Temple:** The mixed feelings in the mother's heart, and her almost reproachful language as she sought to charge Jesus with having disregard His mother's natural feelings, must have been checked by a sort of awe as she looked at Him in the temple with rapt countenance and then heard Him say that His place was in His Father's house. (2)

**Jesus as an adult:** There were further sword-thrusts as she understood that her illustrious Son was absolutely independent of her authority and of human relationship. There must have been a pang in Mary's heart the day Jesus left her home for good, and another heart-would as she encountered the lack of official recognition as His mother. Whenever He met her it seemed as if He repelled her. (2)

**Marriage Feast:** Although blessed among women, Mary was to learn that she must not be permitted to control the operations of the One sent of the Father. As the Son of Mary, Jesus was willingly subject to her, but now as the Son of God, Mary must endeavor to be subject to Him. The very fact that He addressed her as *woman* and not as *mother* must have had but one meaning for her, namely, that from now on the direction of His course had entered into His Father's hands. (2)

**Jesus' Ministry:** It is natural for a mother to be concerned about her Son wearing Himself out. He might fall exhausted under His load of work and perhaps sink into an untimely grave. Thinking, perhaps, that she might save Jesus from the effects of an imprudent enthusiasm, Mary receives another mild rebuke in which He hinted that the blessedness of Mary consisted not in being His mother, but in believing in Him and in His God-given mission, and in obedience to His words. Jesus again denies any authority of earthly relatives, or any privilege from human

relationships. (Matt. 12:46-50, Luke 11:28) (2)

**Jesus' Death:** Mary's deepest sword piercing came when in agony she stood beneath that cross and witnessed the degradation, desolation and death of the One whom she had brought into the world and intensely loved. (2)

### Her Joy

**Holy Spirit:** To have received the Holy Spirit along with Christ's other disciples. (1)

**Her Son:** To see her child raised from the dead. (1)

**Chosen By God:** Her choice by God to be the mother of the Incarnate Son is as mysterious as her conception of Him within her virgin womb. When the fullness of time had come for Jesus to be manifested He did not go to a city, but to a remote and inconsiderate town - not to a palace but a poor dwelling - not to the great and learned but to lowly partisans - for a woman to bring the Savior into a lost world. The gentle and lowly Mary of Nazareth was the Father's choice as the mother of His beloved Son, and that she herself was overwhelmed at God's condescending grace in choosing her is evident from her song of praise in which she magnified Him for regarding her lowly estate, and in exalting her. (2)

**Her Salutation:** Taking the Lord at His word, Mary praised Him as if what He had declared had been fully accomplished. What a marvelous song of rejoicing the Magnificat is! It reveals poetic and prophetic genius of the highest order, and takes its place among the finest productions of the world. This extemporaneous ode expressing Mary's joy is indeed one of the choicest gems of Hebrew poetry. (Luke 1:46-55). As accounted by Luke, this lyric expresses Mary's inward and deeply personal sacred and unselfish joy, and likewise her faith in Messianic fulfillment. It is also eloquent with her reverential spirit. Her worship was for her Son, for her spirit rejoiced in Him as her own Savior. (2)

**Jesus' Resurrection:** The last glimpse we have of Mary is a heartwarming one. We find her among the group of believers gathered together in the upper chamber. (Acts 1:12-14). Her Son is alive forevermore, and life has changed for her. So she takes her place among those awaiting the coming of the Spirit to equip them for the beginning of the Christian community. Mary was present in that upper room not as an object of worship, not as the directress of the infant church, but as a humble suppliant along with the rest, including her sons, who by this time, were believers. We see her praying, along with her sons whom she had possible led into a full-orbed faith, as well as the other disciples who had met to pray and await the gift of Pentecost. (2)

**Motherhood:** What must not be forgotten is the fact that Mary not only bore Jesus, but also mothered Him for the thirty years He tarried in the poor Nazareth home. Thus from childhood to manhood she did everything a devoted mother could do for the Son whom she knew was no ordinary Man. "Hers was the face that unto Christ had most resemblance." While Mary did not neglect her motherly duties to the sons and daughters she bore Joseph, because of all she knew Jesus to be she surrounded His early years with character-forming influences. From the divine side we know that as Jesus grew "he waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him," and that He "increased in stature and in favor with God and man." But from the human side Jesus was subject to the home control of Joseph and Mary. What did she give him? Mutual trust, love, sympathetic understanding, purity of heart, sense of the presence of God, obedience, and saturation with the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament. (2)

**Simeon and Anna:** How Mary marveled at the solemn but glorious predictions of the well known and devout priest Simeon and the prophetess Anna. (3)

**Mary:** Her first thought at having seen and heard the impossible report of the angel may have been disbelief. Her first reaction may have been to try figuring out how to tell her bewildered parents and her fiancé. We don't know. But her first words were words of praise. (4)

### Her Promises, Her Lessons, Her Legacy

**Nothing is impossible with God:** When God says nothing is impossible, he means it. he is all powerful, omnipotent, the Savior of the world. No matter what he has promised, no matter how hard or impossible that promise seems to fulfill, he can and will do it. (1)

**Mary:** Mary does not stand apart from the rest of the sinful human race, born immaculate and remaining sinless throughout her life. As a member of a fallen race she recognized her need of deliverance from sin and guilt when she sang, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God *my* Savior." The "culture" of Mary does not have its origin in the Bible for "there is not a word there from which it could be inferred; not in the Creeds, nor in the fathers of the first five

centuries.” Mary never magnified herself - only her Lord. Her glorification as the object of worship, her function as an intercessor through whom prayers must be addressed to Christ, her perpetual care of Christ and her present influence over Him, are the false creations of Rome. The elevation and worship of Mary is most unscriptural and idolatrous. The Bible portrays her as a woman “blessed among women,” but only as a mere faithful, humble, godly woman. The true Christian portrayal of the mother of Jesus is that to be found only in the gospels in which the Master taught that man has access to God <i>only</i> through His all-sufficient mediatorial work. (John 14:6) (2)
<b>Praise:</b> You should never have difficulty thinking of reasons why God deserves your praise. You should enjoy the times you have to praise your Lord, both privately and publicly in worship. If your life is not filled with praise, it may be that you have lost your appreciation for God’s merciful activity in your life. Never forget what God has saved you from. Never take for granted what it means to have the assurance of eternity with God. Do not disregard the spiritual kinship you enjoy with other believers. Take time often to recount the blessings He has poured out upon you and your family. As you contemplate the boundless love and mercy God has shown you, you will want to sing His praises as Mary did. (4)
<b>Faith:</b> Are the simple choices you’re making today building a steady base of trust and obedience underneath you, so that you can continue growing toward a full lifetime of faithfulness? (4)
<b>Worship:</b> Worship is a habit, an exercise - a choice to reorder the way you think and live, claiming godly praise as your top priority - worshipping at will, at a moment’s notice, at all times. (4)
<b>God’s Purposes:</b> God does not exist to serve man; man exists to serve God. (7)
<b>God’s Timing:</b> God’s timing is governed by His great wisdom and knowledge. (7)
<b>Life’s pain should never allow us to neglect caring for our loved ones:</b> Jesus shows us that. Despite the agonizing pain He felt as He hung dying on the cross, He was thinking of Mary, and He called John to provide for her. (7)
<b>Life’s pain should never cause us to doubt God’s care for us:</b> The almighty is with us always, even to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20), and He will not fail to provide for us (Psalm 23:1) or to love us to the end. (7)
<b>S</b> - substitutes His sinless life for our sinful one (2 Corinthians 5:21) <b>A</b> - assures us of eternal life (John 10:28-29) <b>V</b> - Vanquishes Satan’s hold on our life (2 Timothy 2:26) <b>I</b> - initiates us into the family of God (Galatians 4:4-6) <b>O</b> - overthrows the power of sin (Romans 6:1-10) <b>R</b> - reconciles us to a holy God (2 Corinthians 5:19) (7)
<b>God’s Grace:</b> Mary was an elect of God in a unique sense. Her privilege was greater than was ever given any human being. And the striking aspect of her glory is that its brightest lustre was reflected by the dark shadow of her lowliness. That honor was not granted to her because she had earned it, but because God’s sovereignty designated that she should be the recipient of it. He had selected Mary for that purpose. He saved her life, and He sent her His Angel to acquaint her with heaven’s message. Hence, there is no reason to praise her because of the extraordinary abundance of grace which was given her. Not Mary, but the Lord God must be praised because of the grace which He gave her. The very essence of grace demands this. Grace bars the possibility of human credit and pride. We may not be praised for the grace we have received. Grace is no longer grace the moment our own virtue of effort achieves something. (17)

<b>Her Legacy of Prayer</b>	
<i>Women of the Bible</i>	
<b>Reflect On</b>	Luke 1:26-28
<b>Praise God</b>	That nothing is impossible with him.
<b>Offer Thanks</b>	That a woman’s body became the dwelling place of divinity.
<b>Confess</b>	Any tendency to devalue yourself as a woman.
<b>Ask God</b>	To make you a woman, like Mary, who brings Jesus into the world by expressing his character, power, forgiveness, and grace.
<b>A Final Prayer</b>	My soul is full of you, my God, and I cannot hold back my gladness. Everyone who sees me will call me blessed because you have noticed me. You saw my lowliness and my need and filled my emptiness with your presence. Form you likeness in me so that, like Mary, I can bring you into a world that desperately needs your love.

	<b>Final Thoughts</b>
	<b><i>Women of the Bible</i></b>
<b>Lift Your Heart</b>	What are your struggles, your joys? What thoughts run through your mind? Does anything or anyone take you by surprise? Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your reflections, to help you imagine the sounds, sights, and smells that will bring each scene to life. Let the Scriptures feed your soul with a deeper understanding of God's intention for your life. Pray for the grace to be like the woman who said: "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said."

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