

# Mary the Mother of Jesus

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## Introduction:

Mary, the mother of Jesus (Luke 1). Gabriel, an angel of the highest rank, visited Mary, the betrothed teenager. She was the first to hear that God was about to break into history in the person of the Messiah, her Son-to-be, and Mary was the first to hear His name, Jesus. Mary responds to the stunning announcement with a beautiful and simple faith expressed both in her submission to God's will and in the Magnificat, her prophetic song of praise (Luke 1:46–55). In every way Mary is shown not only to be favored by God, but also an example of that simple faith

## Gabriel's announcement to Mary

Lk 1:26-38 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, 27 to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. 28 Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!" 29 Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. 30 "Don't be afraid, Mary," the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God! 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!" 34 Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." 35 The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. 36 What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. 37 For the word of God will never fail." 38 Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

**Mary was a teenager** (13 years old?) betrothed (engaged) to an older man named Joseph  
Betrothed was the first stage of marriage in Jewish culture, usually lasting for a year before the wedding night. It was more legal than engagement is in our culture.

### Mary's feelings (response)

Confused, disturbed, fear (v. 29)

Gabriel's greeting troubled Mary. Mary was not frightened at the appearance of the mighty angel; she was troubled at the "manner of greeting" (v. 29). What Gabriel had said was, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" (v. 28).

### Mary's question (1:34-37)

How could she have a child since she had never had sexual relations with a man? The question arose out of curiosity, and the angel answered her:

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Lk 1:35).

What is significant is the questions she didn't ask. Questions like:

"But, what will Joseph think?"

"What will people think of me when I'm found to be pregnant?"

"But, what about the disgrace? What will happen to me?"

### Mary's response

"I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." (v.38)

## The faith of Zacharias versus The faith of Mary (Lk 1)

Zacharias is an aged and respected priest, he was serving God in the temple when the angel Gabriel appeared to announce that he and his wife would have a son. Stunned and unbelieving, Zacharias's first words were, "How shall I know this?" He is then temporarily struck mute by Gabriel "because you did not believe my words" (Lk 1:20).

Shortly after this, Gabriel appeared to Mary, a young peasant girl in Galilee. Unlike Zacharias, who doubted "whether" the promise would be kept, Mary believed, asking only "how."

With a beautiful and simple faith Mary accepted God's gift and rejoiced in Him. How striking the contrasts are:

	<b>Zacharias</b>	<b>Mary</b>
<b>Location</b>	Temple	Galilee
<b>Status</b>	A priest	A commoner
Characteristics	Male, mature	Female, young
Response	Unbelief, challenge	Faith, praise
<b>Consequence</b>	Silenced	Blessed

**Mary's calling** (vs. 31-33). Gabriel explained the role that God's favor had decreed for Mary:

- She will conceive and bring forth a Son.
- She is to name her Son Jesus ["Savior"].
- Her Son would be great.
- Her Son will be "the Son of the Highest" [that is, God].
- God would give Him the throne of David.
- Her Son will reign over Israel forever.
- Her Son's kingdom will never end.

### **Mary's Magnificat (Lk 1:46-56)**

Lk 1:46-55 Mary responded, "Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. 47 How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! 48 For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. 49 For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. 50 He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. 51 His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. 52 He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. 54 He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. 55 For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever."

- She gives God praise
- She sees herself as a lowly servant girl, but from now on blessed.
- She sees God blessing humility and resisting the proud (1Pt 5:5).
- Most significantly, we see her focus on the covenant God made with Abraham as the foundation of His faithfulness to His people.
- Mary's faith was based on knowledge of God's purposes and confidence in His faithfulness.
- Mary knew, loved, trusted, and exalted God.

### **Jesus and Mary – the feast of Passover at the age of 12 (Lk 2:41-52)**

Lk 2:45-51 When they couldn't find him, they went back to Jerusalem to search for him there. 46 Three days later they finally discovered him in the Temple, sitting among the religious teachers, listening to them and asking questions. 47 All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. 48 His parents didn't know what to think. "Son," his mother said to him, "why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic, searching for you everywhere." 49 "But why did you need to search?" he asked. "Didn't you know that I must be in my Father's house?" 50 But they didn't understand what he meant. 51 Then he returned to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. And his mother stored all these things in her heart.

- Mary's first response - His parents didn't know what to think (v. 48).
- Mary's question - "Son, why have you done this to us?"
- Mary treasure (stores) all these things in her heart (Lk 2:19, 51).

Events that marked Jesus as special in Mary's mind.

The angel's visit.

The miraculous pregnancy.

Joseph's confirmation of his confidence of her virgin state.

The shepherds' tale of angels celebrating in Bethlehem's skies.

The prophecies of Simeon and Anna.  
The visit of the Magi (guided by angels) that brought Him gifts and worshiped Him.  
Joseph's dreams and their years in Egypt and then back to Nazareth.

## **Mary's relationship with Jesus during His ministry**

### **The wedding (Jn 2:1-11)**

Jn 2:1-5 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; 2 and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

- Mary's request - "They have no wine."
- Jesus replies - "Woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come."  
Jesus addressed her as "woman," and say's literally, "what to me and to you?"
- Mary's last recorded words in Scripture - "Whatever He says to you, do it."

### **Mary and family seems to struggle with faith in his claims.**

Each of the synoptic Gospels notes that shortly after Jesus' opponents have charged him with being either mad or in league with Satan that His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him (Mt 12:46-50; Mk 3:31-35; Lk 8:19-21). Clearly this was a family delegation, coming with the intent not of listening to Jesus but of speaking to Him. The context is important, for they came at the moment when opposition to Jesus was becoming open. It is also important to remember that long after this time "even His brothers did not believe in Him" (Jn 7:5).

### **Mary is at the cross (Jn 19:25-27).**

We next meet Mary standing near the cross with women friends and John the disciple, where Jesus asks John to take Mary in as his mother.

### **Mary is a disciple of Jesus in the upper room (Ac 1:4).**

The last mention of Mary in the New Testament pictures "Mary the mother of Jesus" with His brothers meeting with the disciples, praying to the One with whom they had been so familiar but never truly known.

Only after the resurrection shed its light on Jesus' mission and His essential nature as God's Son did Mary fully and completely believe in her Son.

Some mistakenly cast Mary as the "mother of God." She was indeed the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. However, God the Son existed from eternity; Mary was the source only of Jesus' human nature. Even so, it is appropriate that we honor Mary and the faith she displayed throughout her life. Mary was a truly remarkable woman; her faith and faithfulness set an example for us all.

The relationship between Mary and Jesus was complicated by the fact that although Jesus was God the Son He lived in this world as a true human being. He grew up as a child subject to His parents. At thirty He set out on a course the direction of which neither Mary nor Jesus' brothers could understand. Only after His death and resurrection did the family finally understand that the Son and Brother who had lived among them was indeed God incarnate. Then, and only then, did all become clear, and Jesus' earthly family worshiped Him.

## **Lessons from Mary's life**

Even as a young girl Mary showed herself to have great faith. Her response to God was immediate and selfless, and her words of praise reveal an appealing simplicity.

At the same time Mary was human. As her family grew, Mary loved her husband and mothered her boys and girls. She must have thought often of the strange events that marked her oldest, Jesus, as special. Yet she mothered Him as she did the others, and He submitted to her parental authority. Mary's days were filled with the typical task of first-century housewives: grinding grain, cooking meals, weaving cloth, directing her children's activities, talking with her husband. In this she was indistinguishable from other women in her village. She was undoubtedly known as warm and friendly, a good friend and a caring person. Even Jesus Himself during these years seemed no different than others.

When Jesus began His public ministry, Mary seems to have been puzzled. She was as amazed as others were at His teaching and healings. Knowing her innate humility, we can be sure Mary never postured or bragged of being the mother of the Man all Israel was talking about. In the end, after Jesus rose and His identity as God's Son was no longer in any doubt, Mary took her place with the others who believed in Him. And that place was on her knees.

Here, as in every glimpse of Mary that Scripture provides, we see her as a model believer. The Mary of Scripture is an exemplar of faith in God. Mary is a sister in Christ to be admired, appreciated, and honored. Mary is a woman whose example all are privileged to follow.

**Mary is an example for all:**

Mary's humility of faith.

Each day we could pray, "Behold the [servant] of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38). This is a simple prayer of faith and submission to God's will.

Mary chose to value what God said above the opinions of others.

Rather than hesitate to accept the angel's commission because of what others might think, she chose God's will. It is not what people think of us that counts but God's assessment.

We all struggle with issues of faith at certain times in life.

Even Mary did not understand fully the import of Jesus' teachings. She had been inseminated by the Holy Spirit and visited by an angel telling her to name her son "Jesus" (Savior). She had also been told that the "Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). So, it shouldn't surprise us if we don't always understand the plan God has for us.

Mary's life reveals meditative wisdom.

Mary remembered the wise men's words and "pondered them in her heart" (Lk 2:19). After finding the boy Jesus in the temple debating with the sages, Mary "kept all these things in her heart" (Lk 2:51). There are special incidents that we may not fully understand, but, like Mary, we should store them in our hearts until God provides further insights.

Resources used: Every Woman in the Bible (pp. 169 - 175)