

## Week 11 Day 6 | *New Testament Heroes: Mary*

Like Joseph, Mary's response to the news of the birth of Jesus offers many lessons about living a life characterized by faith and obedience.

We all know the general story of Jesus' birth. Gabriel, an angel of the Lord, appears to Mary, a virgin engaged to be married. The angel reveals that Mary would give birth to the Son of God. Nine-ish months later, Joseph and Mary travel to Bethlehem, where Jesus is born. Shepherds see some angels and rush off to see the Messiah lying in a manger.

It's easy to overlook some rather important details that make Mary's response to the situation so extraordinary, such as her age. Mary was likely only 12 or 13 when Gabriel informed her of the news that she was pregnant.

Also extraordinary was Gabriel. His appearing to Mary was a miracle in and of itself, and miracles weren't all that common. Witnessing something that happened so seldomly would be a spectacle at any age, let alone to someone so young.

Then factor in that the miracle itself: Mary, a virgin, will be giving birth to the Son of God and He will change the course of human history. Talk about pressure!

Upon hearing all this, we read Mary's simple reply:

*"Mary responded, 'I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true.'—Luke 1:38 (NLT)*

She didn't say, "Why me? Can't someone else do it?" She didn't reply, "I'm not ready for kids. I really just want to get married and have some 'me and Joseph time,' because, you know, once you're a parent, you're always a parent."

We see no indication that Mary was concerned about the looks she would get, being an unwed, pregnant teen. Think the stigma is rough now? Back then, it would have looked like adultery, which was punishable by death by stoning. Yet, Mary shows a willing and fearless obedience with five simple words: "I am the Lord's servant."

After Gabriel appeared to Mary, we read that Mary went to see her cousin Elizabeth, who has experienced a miracle of her own (Luke 1:5–25). Upon hearing Mary's greeting, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. In Luke 1:45 Elizabeth says, "You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said." Mary's obedience is reinforced by her faith. For some people, obedience and faith can be mutually exclusive. Not for Mary.

In Luke 1:46–55 we have Mary's response. Scholars call it "The Magnificat." In this song of praise, she details her blessings. Mary also acclaims the great provision and mercy that God the Savior has for His people. In the song, she refers to herself as "his lowly servant girl" (verse 48). By referring to "his," she establishes to whom she belongs. Then by describing herself as "lowly servant girl," she acknowledges her role in His plan. Once again, just like in her response to Gabriel, Mary's response reinforces her mature humility.

Mary understands the source of her true wealth and hope. We're told in Luke 2:19, "but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often." She made a habit of counting her blessings and remembering the significance of Jesus' arrival. In addition to her humility, Mary displayed ongoing gratitude and kept an intentional awareness of what God was doing.

Now think back to the sort of things you were into when you were Mary's age. Can you recall how mature you were when you were 12 or 13? What would you have done if an angel of God appeared to you? How would you have reacted to the idea of being a parent at that age? How would you have handled being told you would usher in the

Savior of all mankind?

I didn't like waking up on Saturdays to a list of chores to do before I could play Nintendo. Tell me my childhood was over, I was going to be a parent, my son was to be called Jesus, Jesus was also the Son of God, and His kingdom would never end? My first thought would probably be, "I don't even get to name him?" I certainly would not have responded like Mary did.

We aren't often asked to obey in events that are going to change the history of the world. We are asked to obey God in the "everyday" events, including those involving body stewardship. What if we modeled our approach to fitness after Mary's response to Gabriel and ultimately to God? We know in our heart that we need to exercise, eat, and sleep better as a way of life. Yet we're reluctant. Instead, what if we just responded with simple obedience?

What if we stopped fearfully questioning whether our efforts were doable, sustainable, or productive? What if, instead, we had faith that God would work out what He willed in the first place?

Rather than counting the cost, what if we consistently considered the blessing of His provision in our lives instead? What if we were humble and ever-thankful to the Lord? What if we simply trusted that what He requires of us, He will provide for us?

What if . . . from this point forward . . . you responded to your fitness with "I am the Lord's servant?" What if you responded to your entire life that way? How much more abundant, productive, and fulfilling of a life could the Lord live through you?

Now, before you start thinking you couldn't do that, let me share five other words even more powerful than Mary's. They actually preceded Mary's in "The Magnificat," and gave her full confidence to respond with complete submissiveness. In fact, their truth precedes the creation of the world. They manifest themselves daily in the glue holding life together. They pave the way for a life lived in perfect eternity:

*"... nothing is impossible with God."—Luke 1:37 (NLT)*

If these five words can change the world, could they not also change your life as they did for Mary?

Mary responded as a servant. We, too, would be wise to adopt a servants' mindset with our faith and fitness. We can then trust that the One who came not to be served but to serve will work wonders in our lives.

### Prayer

*Father, thank You for choosing a young servant girl as a model of humility, faith, and obedience. Will You please forgive me when my life is not characterized by those same qualities? Please help me always rely on You as my strength for everything, knowing it's all possible because of You. Amen.*

### Meditation

Nothing is impossible with God.

### Daily Spiritual Exercise

Pick a meal to fast from for the day. The hunger you feel is a reminder to be praying for a fully surrendered life. As you pray throughout the day, be sure to ask God what He'd like you to learn from this exercise. We don't just pray. We pray and we listen.