

# **Giving to God Like Mary: A Life of Consecration**

Luke 1:26-55

Open with me in your Bibles to the Gospel by Luke, chapter 1. Giving is the theme of this season we live in this morning, even the stores around us have picked up that theme. But as we open to the Book of Luke, rather than gift-giving, we are going to study an even greater gift: giving our lives, bodies, and minds to God like Mary did.

This Christmas season we are going to look at five lives that were focused upon Christ at His birth. Each is a beautiful portrait of giving to Him what they had. Each of them have been immortalized by God for what they did.

Think of that. Five individuals did something that only God really saw, and what only a few others barely witnessed as they watched. But what those five did has become a part of what will last forever and ever.

This morning each of us are also offered the opportunity each day to do things only God really sees, and what few if any others get to witness, but when we give ourselves in acts of obedient offerings to God, we become a part of something that will last forever and ever.

One of the elements of Heaven is that God never forgets what individuals offered to Him. God collects our gifts and never loses them, gets rid of them, or forgets them. What we offer to God, like these small events in these lives that surrounded Christ's birth, lasts for ever and for ever.

Let's meet this incredible woman. Of all the writers of Scripture it is Luke who highlights Mary. Twelve of the 20 verses that name her are in Luke and one is in Acts so 65% of all that we have comes to us through Luke. So we need to turn to Luke 1. We will find out the qualities God admires in a woman. He picked her out of the entire world for this special assignment!

The Yeshiva<sup>1</sup> in Zippori - There is an old Christian tradition, dating at least to Byzantine times that Mary was born in Zippori. Israeli guide, Yossi Ashkenazi, stated that evidence from Talmudic sources confirms this, and that Mary's father was the headmaster of Zippori's Jewish school (Yeshiva). The Gospel accounts indicate that the Lord Jesus was often called "Rabbi" by His disciples and other people. The term Rabbi was not used loosely in Israel; it was only attributed to someone who had received the rigorous training in the Law of Moses provided by a Yeshiva. The small town of Nazareth was large enough to have its own synagogue, but it was certainly not large enough to have a rabbinic Yeshiva. So it is reasonable to speculate that Jesus studied at the Yeshiva in Zippori where His own maternal grandfather was the headmaster. This conclusion helps us to fill in some of the gaps in the silent years of our Lord's life.

#### FIRST, MARY A DEVOUT STUDENT OF GOD'S WORD AND A GODLY WOMAN WAS LOOKING FOR JESUS (MATTHEW 1:18)

1. MARY LISTENED TO GOD. (Luke 1:26-28).
2. MARY HUMBLER HERSELF BEFORE GOD SAID YES TO GOD'S GRACE. (Luke 1:29 Who me?) No airs, no pride, just a humble troubled heart that anyone would even say such a thing. She knew her own heart, certainly God would do! She was Saved by God. (Luke 1:30 lit. 'discovered grace of God ') Mary joined the countless multitude who are heirs of life eternal by God's grace. Her study of the Word led her to the open arms of "God my Savior".
3. MARY SURRENDERED TO GOD'S WILL (Luke 1:31-33) To produce within her body tiny hands that would some day touch lepers with a healing touch, to form a mouth within her womb that would speak the very Word of God, to feel the kick of feet that would walk the roads of Israel and spread the Gospel. What an incredible ministry opportunity.
4. MARY EXPERIENCED GOD (Luke 1:34-37) She wouldn't even consider anything immoral. Instead she was surrounded by the Shekinah as God the Son entered her womb. God doing the impossible is what our life for Him is all about.
5. MARY SERVED GOD JOYFULLY (Luke 1:38-45) She was a Slave of God. Luke 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (NIV) Wow, what a submissive and godly attitude. I'll say yes Lord

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<sup>1</sup> Tom McCall with Zola Levitt, *The Stones Cry Out*. Dallas, Texas: ZOLA, no date, pgs 59-63.

yes to your will and to your way! All I am all I have all I'll ever be . . . And off she goes to be a blessing, starting with her cousin who hadn't told her the big news yet!

6. **MARY IMMERSERD HERSELF IN THE SCRIPTURES.** (Luke 1:46-55) She Sought God. Have you paused to ask yourself how she did it? For starters, chew on this - In a world where Mary lived:
- ✓ every drop of water was carried home by women from springs or wells in clay pots.
  - ✓ Every ounce of flour was ground with a stone mill.
  - ✓ Every loaf of bread was baked in an oven with a wood fire burning to heat it.
  - ✓ Every dish was hand washed (remember that well, the pot, the walk . . .)

All this to say that, time was at a premium, what's new right? But also, women were not at a premium. Jesus was the first to elevate women to their proper place. In Mary's time they were close to being furniture. So her knowledge of the Scriptures must have come from either her dad who Luke tells us was named Heli (Luke 3:23 traces Mary back to Adam to show Jesus was Savior of the world. Matthew 1 traces Joseph back to Abraham to show Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews.)

Maybe Heli encouraged his daughter by exposing her deeply to the Scriptures. What a wonderful pursuit for any dad. Whatever the means Mary SOUGHT GOD! Mary was a woman about whom all we know in a practical way is that she learned her manners from the Word of God. Sounds like a good idea. If we were to look over her shoulder as she read from the scrolls and listened to God's truth we might learn what made her tick!

Matthew 1:16 *"And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ"*.

- Joseph was a great man in the sight of the Lord, with few details given in God's Word. His father's name was Jacob (Matthew 1:16) and he is described as a craftsman or construction worker (*tektōn*), which may have meant a stone worker or a carpenter (Matthew 13:55). The most important truth recorded by God is that he was a "righteous man" (1:19). Joseph is a clear portrait of an Old Testament saint.
- Mary is also portrayed as a godly woman who was sensitive and submissive to the Lord's will. Her response to Gabriel's announcement says it all – Mary said, 'Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to your word' (Luke 1:38).

seven elements of a life

THAT MAGNIFIES GOD

- I. **MARY LISTENED TO GOD.** (Luke 1:26-28) She joined so many others Adam and Eve in the Garden, Noah in the Pre-Flood world, Abram in Ur, Saul on the road to Damascus . . . God is in the people seeking business.

- II. MARY HUMBLED HERSELF BEFORE GOD SAID YES TO GOD'S GRACE. (Luke 1:29 Who me?) No airs, no pride, just a humble troubled heart that anyone would even say such a thing. She knew her own heart, certainly God would to! She was Saved by God. (Luke 1:30 lit. 'discovered grace of God ') Mary joined the countless multitude who are heirs of life eternal by God's grace. Marvelous grace of our loving Lord grace that exceeds our sin and our shame, yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured there where the blood of the Lamb was shed. Her study of the Word led her to the open arms of "God my Savior".
- III. MARY SURRENDERED TO GOD'S WILL (Luke 1:31-33) To produce within her body tiny hands that would some day touch lepers with a healing touch, to form a mouth within her womb that would speak the very Word of God, to feel the kick of feet that would walk the roads of Israel and spread the Gospel. What an incredible ministry opportunity.
- But wait, not to lessen her calling, but isn't that the opportunity all moms have?
  - To teach those tiny little ones that the greatest joy in all the world is to be touched by Jesus and be healed from the dreaded leprosy of sin? And to use their mouth share the power of the gospel with any who will listen. Can't we all do that and share in Mary's great opportunity?
  - And as a mother we can start their feet toward serving the Lord in many ways? Yes, what an opportunity we share. That is why Paul said in I Timothy 2 that women equal (are saved from second rate ministry) the men in church teaching and leading ministry - mothers bear and raise the teachers and leaders!
- IV. MARY EXPERIENCED GOD (Luke 1:34-37) She wouldn't even consider anything immoral. Instead she was surrounded by the Shekinah as God the Son entered her womb. God doing the impossible is what our life for Him is all about.
- V. MARY SERVED GOD JOYFULLY (Luke 1:38-45) She was a Slave of God. Luke 1:38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (NIV) Wow, what a submissive and godly attitude. I'll say yes Lord yes to your will and to your way! All I am all I have all I'll ever be . . . And off she goes to be a blessing, starting with her cousin who hadn't told her the big news yet!
- VI. MARY IMMERSED HERSELF IN THE SCRIPTURES. (Luke 1:46-55) She Sought God. Look at Have you paused to ask yourself how she did it? For starters, chew on this - In a world where Mary lived every drop of water was carried home by women from springs or wells in clay pots. Every ounce of flour was ground with a stone mill. Every bread loaf was baked in an oven with a wood fire burning to heat it. All dishes were washed (remember that well, the pot, the walk . . .) So time was at a premium, what's new right? But also, women were not at a premium. Jesus was the first to elevate women to their proper place. In Mary's time they were close to being furniture. So her knowledge of the Scriptures must have come from either her dad who Luke tells us was named Heli (Luke 3:23 traces Mary back to Adam to show

Jesus was Savior of the world. Matthew 1 traces Joseph back to Abraham to show Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews.) Maybe Heli encouraged his daughter by exposing her deeply to the Scriptures. What a wonderful pursuit for any dad. Whatever the means Mary SOUGHT GOD!

- A. Mary was a woman about whom all we know in a practical way is that she learned her manners from the Word of God. Sounds like a good idea. If we were to look over her shoulder as she read from the scrolls and listened to God's truth we might learn what made her tick! One thing we can be sure of, as a relative of David and Solomon, she would have read God's Word they were inspired to write. Look with me at Proverbs 14:1 The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands. (NKJV)
- B. What a contrast. The wise woman is a builder of a godly home. She is a model of godly conduct. The foolish woman is a destroyer. That is what the words "tear down" mean. She destroys her home, her family and eventually her own life. Word by word, person by person, her evil stifles, chokes and eventually destroys people and relationships. What is her outcome? Look back at Proverbs 11:29 He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, And the fool [will be] servant to the wise of heart. (NKJV).
- C. There is a classic American Tale<sup>2</sup>, Gone with the Wind that so vividly portrays this idea. The movie is based on Margaret Mitchell's novel about a slice of Southern Living in the strife torn Civil War Era. It was a life nearly oblivious to the world around it. It was a vividly selfish, indulgent life. The central character is well known to us - the enticing southern belle, Scarlet O'Hara. A cunning and crafty woman who knew what she wanted and always tried to get it. Her self-centeredness is in stark contrast to the servant hearted Melanie. So Solomon, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, contrasts the selfish and indulgent Foolish woman to the sweet and selfless Wise woman.
- D. How did Mary cultivate godliness? First Mary would have applied herself to avoid the portrait of the Foolish Woman in Proverbs:
1. Mary had learned to avoid being IMMODEST and alluring in her dress. Proverbs 7:10 Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. (NIV). Her clothing points to her not to her Father in Heaven and His holiness.
  2. Mary had learned to avoid any mocking at sin not hating and avoiding it. Proverbs 7:13-14 She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: 14 "I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. (NIV). There is no fear of God, the future consequence or the present destructiveness of her actions.
- VII. MARY NEVER STOPPED GROWING SPIRITUALLY. She was Sensitive to God. (Luke 2:19) But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. (NIV). Where

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<sup>2</sup> Ideas found in Swindoll, You and Your Child, p. 90.

did Luke get all this material he recorded in his two volume work on the first century event that changed everything? Yes, some of it came right out of the air from heaven. The Holy Spirit just told him what to say (inspiration). But the rest came from hard work, interviewing the witnesses. Yes, every word of God's Word is inspired (inerrant, infallible, pure and divine) but each one came from somewhere. I think these words were from Mary after a long time of pondering (lit. 'to put together') all that God had done.

1. MARY LISTENED TO GOD.
2. MARY HUMBLED HERSELF BEFORE GOD SAID YES TO GOD'S GRACE.
3. MARY SURRENDERED TO GOD'S WILL
4. MARY EXPERIENCED GOD
5. MARY SERVED GOD JOYFULLY
6. MARY IMMERSSED HERSELF IN THE SCRIPTURES.
7. MARY NEVER STOPPED GROWING SPIRITUALLY.



God loves beauty, surrounds Himself with beauty, and wants us to allow His beauty to be upon us. In the prayer of Moses the man who knew God face-to-face we find these words, listen to Moses' prayer at the very end of Psalm 90:

Psalm 90:17 (NKJV) And let the beauty<sup>3</sup> of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands.

Moses wanted God's beauty to rest upon his life.

Our God of beauty has surrounded Himself with a Universe so filled with beauty, that even unbelievers become overwhelmed at such magnificence.

This week as the scientific community was digesting the latest images sent from the Hubble Telescope's ongoing mapping of the Universe, the following report was sent to the news by the Space Telescope Science Institute that processes the photos:

"[we] are dealing with the most incredible pictures of the universe that have ever been collected, and you do treat these images with reverence. These pictures speak of death and creation, stars blowing up and stars being born—they become almost spiritual."<sup>4</sup>

Even God-denying, evolutionary-driven scientists **are shocked at what incredible beauty they see** in the images that explode into view from the fringes of the Universe and everywhere in between.

But such beauty shouldn't shock us because, the God we know and love is a God of Beauty.

## **God is Beautiful**

He defines, creates, and measures beauty. For a moment open with me to Psalm 27 and see our God of beauty anew and afresh.

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, so if you hear about a Hebrew word in your Bible study it is from the Old Testament. There are 13 different words<sup>5</sup> in the Old Testament that are translated into the one English word "beauty". Here are some that are used to describe our God of Beauty. Starting in Psalm 27:4

Psalm 27:4 One [thing] I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell

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<sup>3</sup> The KJV/NKJV use beauty, the ESV/NIV use it in the footnote.

<sup>4</sup> Ben Muessig <http://www.aolnews.com/2010/12/15/best-art-in-the-universe-hubble-space-telescopes-amazing-pics/>

<sup>5</sup> Four of those 13 words are used to describe God: noam, yophi, hararh, and hadar.



in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold **the beauty<sup>6</sup> of the LORD**,  
And to inquire in His temple. (NKJV)

Psalm 29:2 Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in **the beauty<sup>7</sup>** of holiness. (NKJV)

Psalm 50:2 Out of Zion, **the perfection of beauty<sup>8</sup>**, God will shine forth. (NKJV)

Psalm 90:17 And let **the beauty<sup>9</sup> of the LORD our God** be upon us, And establish  
the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands. (NKJV)

We have gathered this morning before our God.

This is His Church, He purchased us so that we as His Church would gather for Him and so that He could walk around us and inhabit our worship. So we should each be sure that we get ready for God and present ourselves as beautifully as possible.

Psalm 96:9 Oh, worship the LORD in **the beauty<sup>10</sup>** of holiness! Tremble before Him,  
all the earth. (NKJV)

As we turn on in our Bibles to I Chronicles 16:29 notice what God desired in the assembly of the believers of the Old Testament times:

**Beauty was expected in corporate (group) worship!** 1 Chronicles 16:29 Give to the LORD the glory [due] His name; Bring an offering, and come before Him. Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! (NKJV)

God was pleased by their preparation to come before Him in the Old Testament times, and He is still very interested in our beauty this morning. When God sees us reflecting His beauty by seeking His holiness it pleases Him. Did you check to see if you were beautiful before you came? Beautiful to God is what I mean! Turn back for a moment to Exodus 28. Here is a stunning thought we may not have fully processed:

**Beauty was required in those who were regulars in God's presence!** Exodus 28:2, 40 "And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, **for glory and for beauty**. 40 For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, **for glory and beauty**. (NKJV)

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<sup>6</sup> Hebrew: noam [all of the main versions (KJV/NKJV/NIV/NAS/ESV) use beauty here as they translate the Hebrew of this verse]

<sup>7</sup> Hebrew: hadarah "beauty" always used for God [here the NIV renders the word "beauty" into splendor while the others do not] also the word found in Psalm 96:9, I Chronicles 16:29, and II Chronicles 20:21.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew: yophi "outward fairness"

<sup>9</sup> Hebrew: noam "pleasantness" the NIV uses "beauty in the footnotes for this verse.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew: hadarah "beauty" always used for God [here the NIV renders the word "beauty" into splendor while the others do not]

## God Wants us To Reflect His Beauty

In all those chapters of rules about the Tabernacle, the sacrifices and the priesthood there is so much more than just a set of Old Testament rules that have passed away. Yes, we no longer have any obligation to keep the ceremonial law, but the desires of God about what pleases Him have not changed. God still loves us as His people to reflect His holiness.

- How much do we just get ready to spend time around others, and forget that we should also get ready for the Lord today?
- When we get ready to go out and be in public we clean up, put on appropriate clothes for what we are doing, and so on; but how about our inner person? Do we stop and also consider whether we clothed ourselves with Christ?

This Christmas season is a wonderful time to pause and ask ourselves, “Have we started the habit of wanting to obey God’s desires and live before Him in the beauty that He desires?” In the New Testament instead of laws that were impossible to ever humanly keep, we have desires expressed to us by the God who bought us with the precious blood of Christ, and has indwelt us with the Spirit of Grace, who empowers us to do what God desires us to do. All we as New Covenant believers have to do is WANT to obey, and by faith surrender to the Spirit of God who will give us the strength, power, and continuing desires to take steps of obedience each day to do what God desires of us. So what does God want from each of us today? To answer that question open with me to Romans 13:14.

The simplest way to put it would be, our task each day is:

### Getting Beautiful For God

This verse is a command Paul gave to everyone at the church in Rome, and by authority of the inspired Word, to all of us here today!

Romans 13:14 (NKJV) But **put on**<sup>11</sup> the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

### Pray

So what exactly does it mean to put on Christ, to become beautiful reflections of God’s beauty? To answer that Paul wrote to a church he had never visited, and gave them the same command, the same word “put on” or “clothe yourselves” and added more details. Turn onward to Colossians 3 with me.

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<sup>11</sup> This verb “put on” in both Romans 13:14 and Colossians 3:12 is an aorist middle imperative. Imperative means that it is a command; in the middle voice =means “for yourself”; and it is translated “put on” in all the major versions except the NIV which says “clothe yourselves with”. So we have a command, an obligation, and a request from the God of the Universe who bought us and owns us: to respond and do what He desires from us and has given us the power to accomplish: IF we want to!

Colossians 3:12-14 (NKJV) Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, **put on** tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

Each of those seven qualities are just Christ living out through me. When I say I want to respond like you did, in your humanity. The desire to have self emptied, and God's Spirit to fill and control us slowly begins to take over in our life.

Salvation is all about God performing a life-long personality change. We are sanctified by the truth of God's Word so that more and more we respond less in our flesh, and more in His Spirit. The Scriptures are filled with biographies of men and women who allowed God to sanctify them, changing them to be beautifully Christlike in their daily life on Earth.

### **Saints are Beautiful to God**

This Christmas season is a time we remember one of the clearest portraits of what a beautiful saint looks like. May I introduce you (or reintroduce you) to Mary, the mother of Jesus! Probably the most recognized but least known members of the cast of Christmas. As we open to Luke 1, let me ask you:

- Who was chosen out of all the women in the whole world to raise God's Son? The answer is: (say it) Mary
- Without exception who is probably the most beloved and best known woman in the world? The answer is: (say it) Mary
- Who is presented as the most honored woman in the Bible? The answer is: (say it) Mary
- Who may very well be the greatest living, breathing example of Proverbs 31 in ordinary everyday life? The answer is: (say it) Mary (and that is probably the most times her name has ever been said aloud in most Protestant churches!)

Mentioned only 20x in the Bible, Mary's life is such a portrait of godliness, humility and yielded-ness.

Mary stands in Scriptures as an example to all of us of devotion and faithfulness.

Her strengths and struggles are all laid out in the Bible.

## **Mary's Life: *Staying Beautiful in God's Sight***

Let's briefly meet this incredible woman.

Of all the writers of Scripture it is Luke who highlights Mary with 12 of the 20 verses that name her are in Luke and one is in Acts. So 65% of all that we have comes to us through Luke.

As we read through Mary's life, starting in Luke 1:26, we will find out how God's beauty is reflected from Mary's life. First:

### **Mary Listened to the Word from God. (Luke 1:26-28)**

Luke 1:26-28 (NKJV) Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

Either we hear God's Word as just the word of men or as it truly is, the Word of God that effectually works in us who receive it by faith.

Mary joined so many others that the Scriptures describe as being sought by God: Adam and Eve in the Garden, Noah in the Pre-Flood world, Abram in Ur, Saul on the road to Damascus. Always remember that God is in the people seeking business. Salvation is of the Lord and it is God who seeks us, He initiates salvation for, Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9).

Next we see that:

### **Mary humbled herself before God, and said yes to His Grace. (Luke 1:29-30)**

Luke 1:29-30 (NKJV) But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Mary partook of God's grace, and was saved by God. (Luke 1:30 literally says you have been 'discovered by the grace of God '). Her hearing and believing God's Word led her to the open arms of: "God my Savior" as Mary says, down a few verses in v. 47, see it there?

Mary needed a Savior, and God the Savior found her with His grace v.30, and she

confessed from then on that God had saved her, and He was her Savior.

Mary joined the countless multitudes that will surround the Throne of God in Heaven singing that they are heirs of life eternal by God's grace. As the hymn writer has said, and so many of us have written in our hearts: "Marvelous grace of our loving Lord grace that exceeds our sin and our shame, yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured there where the blood of the Lamb was shed". Thirdly:

### **Mary Learned what God's will was for her life (Luke 1:31-33)**

Luke 1:31-33 (NKJV) And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

To produce within her body tiny hands that would someday touch lepers with a healing touch, to form a mouth within her womb that would speak the very Word of God, to feel the kick of feet that would walk the roads of Israel and spread the Gospel. What an incredible ministry opportunity.

But wait, not to lessen her calling, but isn't that the opportunity all moms have? To teach those tiny little ones that the greatest joy in all the world is to be touched by Jesus and be healed from the dreaded leprosy of sin? And to use their mouth share the power of the gospel with any who will listen. Can't we all do that and share in Mary's great opportunity?

And as a mother we can start their feet toward serving the Lord in many ways? Yes, what an opportunity we share. That is why Paul said in I Timothy 2 that women equal (are saved from second rate ministry) the men in church teaching and leading ministry - mothers bear and raise the teachers and leaders!

Next we see:

### **Mary experienced God (Luke 1:34-37)**

Luke 1:34-37 (NKJV) Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" 35 And the angel answered and said to 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. 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible."

Notice Mary's response. Even after being sought out and given such an amazing message, humble Mary has airs, no pride, just a humbly troubled heart, that anyone would even say such a thing. Mary knew her own heart, she was nothing and was not worthy to be so greatly blessed by God.

When the power of the Highest overshadowed her, Mary was surrounded by the Shekinah Glory, as God the Son entered her womb.

Mary experienced God within.

Wow, was Mary then the very first New Testament believer indwelt by Christ? That is what all of us believers now have the joy of being: the dwelling place of Christ. Though Christ was physically within her, He was also spiritually within her just as He "dwells in our hearts by faith" as Paul tells us (Ephesians 3:17).

God doing the impossible is what our life for Him is all about. That is what Mary experienced, and that is what we also can experience as we give ourselves to Him. Next we see that:

### **Mary saw herself as God's slave, and served God joyfully (Luke 1:38-45)**

Luke 1:38-45 (NKJV) Then Mary said, "Behold **the maidservant of the Lord!** Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. 39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

Mary declared that she was a Slave of God. When you read Luke 1:38 you see the self-description Mary gives: "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (NIV)

Wow, what a submissive and godly attitude. I'll say yes Lord yes, to your will and to your way! All I am all I have all I'll ever be, I give it all to You. And off she goes to be a blessing, starting with her cousin Elizabeth, who hadn't told her the big news yet! Finally we see that:

## **Mary immersed herself in the Scriptures. (Luke 1:46-55)**

Luke 1:46-55 (NKJV) And Mary said:

“ My soul magnifies the Lord,  
47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.  
48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.  
49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me,  
And holy is His name.  
50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him  
From generation to generation.  
51 He has shown strength with His arm;  
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.  
52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
And exalted the lowly.  
53 He has filled the hungry with good things,  
And the rich He has sent away empty.  
54 He has helped His servant Israel,  
In remembrance of His mercy,  
55 As He spoke to our fathers,  
To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

In these ten verses that flow from Mary’s heart, we see a Mary who was immersed in the Scriptures and who was focused upon God. She points to the Lord 19x, mentions herself 4x, and quotes over twenty different Scripture portions!

### **Seeking God Is Beautiful**

Mary sought God in His Word, and so should we. Have you paused to ask yourself how she did it? For starters, think how hard it would have been to have Bible study in Mary’s day. In the world where Mary lived:

- Every drop of water used in cooking and drinking was carried home by women, from springs or wells, in clay pots.
- Every ounce of flour was ground by hand with a stone mill.
- Every loaf of bread hand-made, and then was baked in an oven heated with a wood fire that had to be kept burning.
- Every one of the dishes that were used were washed with even more water carried from a spring or well.

So time was at a premium, what's new right?

But also, women were not at a premium. Jesus was the first to elevate women to their proper place. In Mary's time they were close to being furniture.

So her knowledge of the Scriptures must have come from either her dad who Luke tells us was named Heli<sup>12</sup>

Maybe Heli encouraged his daughter by exposing her deeply to the Scriptures. What a wonderful pursuit for any dad. Whatever the means Mary immersed herself in God's Word!

### **Mary was Beautiful for God**

Always remember the lessons that God can teach us from this humble servant's life:

**Mary Listened to God.** (Luke 1:26-28)

**Mary humbled herself before God, and said yes to His Grace.** (Luke 1:29-30)

**Mary surrendered to God's will** (Luke 1:31-33)

**Mary experienced God** (Luke 1:34-37)

**Mary served God joyfully** (Luke 1:38-45)

**Mary immersed herself in the Scriptures.** (Luke 1:46-55)

And so can we by God's grace!

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<sup>12</sup> (Luke 3:23 traces Mary back to Adam to show Jesus was Savior of the world. Matthew 1 traces Joseph back to Abraham to show Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews.)



## Study Guide for Further Discussion

**Beauty was how God describes the praise He desires!** 2 Chronicles 20:21 And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who should sing to the LORD, and who should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army and were saying: "Praise the LORD, For His mercy [endures] forever." (NKJV)

**Beauty is a mark of pleasing personal worship times!** Psalm 27:4 One [thing] I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple. (NKJV)

- Have you gone out alone and taken time to adore, cry out to and magnify the Lord ? He is waiting and longing for you to notice him. The bible is not an end but a means. Grandmothers cookies were to get you into her presence. as you get older you go to see her for her not the cookies!

**God is Beautiful!** Isaiah 33:17 Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; They will see the land that is very far off. (NKJV)

**God wants to make us beautiful everyday!** Psalm 90:17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands. (NKJV)

Mary was a woman about whom all we know in a practical way is that she learned her manners from the Word of God. Sounds like a good idea. If we were to look over her shoulder as she read from the scrolls and listened to God's truth we might learn what made her tick! One thing we can be sure of, as a relative of David and Solomon, she would have read God's Word they were inspired to write. Look with me at Proverbs 14:1 The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands. (NKJV)

What a contrast. The wise woman is a builder of a godly home. She is a model of godly conduct. The foolish woman is a destroyer. That is what the words "tear down" mean. She destroys her home, her family and eventually her own life. Word by word, person by person, her evil stifles, chokes and eventually destroys people and relationships. What is her outcome? Look back at Proverbs 11:29 He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, And the fool [will be] servant to the wise of heart. (NKJV).

There is a classic American Tale<sup>13</sup>, Gone with the Wind that so vividly portrays this idea. The movie is based on Margaret Mitchell's novel about a slice of Southern Living in the

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<sup>13</sup> Ideas found in Swindoll, *You and Your Child*, p. 90.

strife torn Civil War Era. It was a life nearly oblivious to the world around it. It was a vividly selfish, indulgent life. The central character is well known to us - the enticing southern belle, Scarlet O'Hara. A cunning and crafty woman who knew what she wanted and always tried to get it. Her self-centeredness is in stark contrast to the servant hearted Melanie. So Solomon, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, contrasts the selfish and indulgent Foolish woman to the sweet and selfless Wise woman.

## **How did Mary Cultivate Godliness?**

We could say that she very likely discovered these ten secrets to unfading and godly beauty that are recorded in the Book of Proverbs that she would have heard, known, loved, and sought to obey. Mary would have applied herself to avoid the portrait of the Foolish Woman in Proverbs and to emulate the godly woman's portrait:

- 1. Mary was beautiful because she had learned to avoid being IMMODEST and alluring in her dress.** Proverbs 7:10 Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. (NIV).
  - Her clothing points to her not to her Father in Heaven and His holiness.
  - Remember the words of Paul in the New Testament Gallery of beautiful women? God emphasizes a beauty of the unseen character, the flesh flaunts the body, God beautifies the spirit!
  - 1 Timothy 2:9 I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, (NIV)
- 2. Mary was beautiful because she had learned to hate and avoid sin and never play with God's mercy.** Proverbs 7:13-14 She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: 14 "I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. (NIV).
  - There is no fear of God, the future consequence or the present destructiveness of her actions.
  - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body. (NIV)
- 3. Mary was beautiful because she had learned to avoid being deceitful and manipulative in her goals.** Proverbs 7:21-23 With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, With her flattering lips she seduced him. 22 Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, 23 Till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, He did not know it [would cost] his life. (NKJV)
  - An ugly woman is self driven and wants her way. A beautiful woman wears heavenly beauty Psalm 90:17 And let the beauty of the LORD our God be

upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands. (NKJV)

- 1 Peter 3:4 Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. (NIV)
4. **Mary was beautiful because she had learned to avoid being LOUD and assertive in her communication.** Proverbs 9:13 The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. (NIV) Proverbs 7:11 (She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home; (NIV)
- This includes disrespect, hostility, aggressiveness and cunningness. All in all bad news.
  - James 3:17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. (NIV)
5. **Mary was beautiful because she had learned to avoid being a fighter, quarreling to get her way.** Proverbs 20:3 [It is] honorable for a man to stop striving, Since any fool can start a quarrel. (NKJV)
- Selfish ambition is that way of life that isn't from God. It is as James said, earthly sensual and devilish.
  - 2 Timothy 2:24 And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. (NIV)
6. **Mary was beautiful because she had learned to love being a homemaker** Proverbs 31:13 She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands. (NKJV) As Paul said, she is a worker at home in Titus 2:5. She loves to tangibly serve others with food and skills, she has a home that is open and hospitable, she is given to ministry to the sick and needy and less fortunate.
7. **Mary was beautiful because she learned to serve others!** Proverbs 31:15, 20 She also rises while it is yet night, And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants. 20 She extends her hand to the poor, Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. (NKJV) She has learned the love of Christ for others.
8. **Mary was beautiful because she learned prudence in Financial Matters.** Proverbs 31:16, 24 She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard. 24 She makes linen garments and sells [them,] And supplies sashes for the merchants. (NKJV) She is a saver not a spender. She can see beyond today alone.
9. **Mary was beautiful because she had learned the great value of Hard Work.** Proverbs 31:17,19 She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms. 19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle. (NKJV) God puts a premium on hard work and so she moves toward it not away. There is no slothfulness, indolence or lack of motivation.
10. **Mary was beautiful because she had learned how to Internalize Biblical Wisdom** Proverbs 31:26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, And on her tongue [is] the law of kindness. (NKJV). The Word is in her heart and life and so it comes out of her mouth. And when it does it is dressed in the clothes of the Spirit, gentle and

kind.

Mary was beautiful because she had learned these secrets of godly womanhood. Is there any comparison. This kind of woman and daughter is a blessing to all. She is a builder of the home and family. And, as Solomon said Proverbs 31:25,28 Strength and honor [are] her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. 28 Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband [also,] and he praises her: (NKJV) the future smiles at her and her children bless her. This is our goal as parents.

Mary was beautiful because she had learned to avoid being these ungodly in these areas. Moms and dads, what are you raising? A wise woman, or a foolish one? Bring your daughters up to the X-Rays of God's Word and see what He finds.

- Is she loud, assertive, boisterous, whiney or the center of attention? Or is she quiet, submissive, gentle and humble?
- Does she dress in a way that draws a young man to think about her body and its enticements or her spirit and its beauty?
- Does she have a holy hatred of sin or does she have a desire to watch sinners [TV and Movies] as they live out their fleshly fantasies?
- Does she use all her powers to get her own way? Does she manipulate by tears, looks and whatever it takes to accomplish her ends?
- Is she argumentative, easily quarreling and fighting with you or her brothers and sisters? Or is she peaceable, gentle and easily entreated?
- If these symptoms are present in any degree or amount the prognosis for the future bleak. One gifted expositor in writing about these verses said, "...we may say with a surgeon's frankness, her home will be like Scarlett's - troubled, torn down, and literally Gone with the Wind.

**Mary never stopped growing spiritually.** She was Sensitive to God. (Luke 2:19)

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. (NIV).

Where did Luke get all this material he recorded in his two-volume work on the first century event that changed everything? Yes, some of it came right out of the air from heaven. The Holy Spirit just told him what to say (inspiration). But the rest came from hard work, interviewing the witnesses. Yes, every word of God's Word is inspired (inerrant, infallible, pure and divine) but each one came from somewhere. I think these words were from Mary after a long time of pondering (lit. 'to put together') all that God had done.