

**MARY -
LOVING GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART
TEN SECRETS FOR ETERNAL
UNFADING BEAUTY**

The other day while standing in one of those endless lines at the super market my eyes caught the following headlines on a newspaper, "World's most beautiful woman hospitalized". Quickly whipping out my cell phone I called Bonnie and immediately knew it was a false story . . . actually, it was about Elizabeth Taylor married countless times, unhappy, overweight and in ill health. The world probably has no better candidate for that role. But God does.

This morning may I introduce again the beautiful woman of God's Word ?
MARY, the mother of James and Jesus!

Who is presented as the most honored woman in the Bible? Say it with me -
MARY

Who was chosen out of all the women in the whole world to raise God's Son?
MARY

Who is the greatest living, breathing example of Proverbs 31 in ordinary everyday life? MARY

Without exception who is probably the most beloved and best known woman in the world? MARY

- I. MARY LISTENED TO GOD. (Luke 1:26-28)
- 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. 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.
- 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 IMMERSERD 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!

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 Tale¹, 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.

10 SECRETS OF ETERNAL BEAUTY

How did Mary cultivate godliness? She discovered the TEN SECRETS FOR ETERNAL BEAUTY! First 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

¹ Ideas found in Swindoll, You and Your Child, p. 90.

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) 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 intreated? 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.
6. MARY WAS BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE SHE HAD LEARNED HOW TO DEVELOP A LOVE FOR DOMESTIC SKILLS 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 HAD LEARNED HOW TO DEMONSTRATE GODLY CONCERN 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 HAD LEARNED HOW TO CULTIVATE 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. 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 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.

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