

# How to Replace Your Worry With Worship

*“He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. His mercy is on those who fear him” (Luke 1:49-50a).*

One of the lessons we learn from Mary’s example is to replace worry with worship. It’s okay to be concerned about your life and to make plans for your future. But Jesus says do not worry (Matt. 6:25–34). Worship is what we can do instead of worry.

Mary was a young woman with a lot to worry about, but she sings instead because she understands the goodness and richness of God’s character. Her theology (who God is) shapes her biography (who she is) and culminates in doxology (how she lives her life, in worship). She doesn’t start her song with all of her concerns or complaints toward God. Instead, she proclaims who God is, and the truth of His goodness eclipses all other concerns and carries her through tough times.

What if the worry is simply too overwhelming? What if you don’t feel like worshipping? I’ll let you know a little secret: You worship your way into worship. You don’t sing because you always feel it. Sometimes you sing until you feel it.

When you’re suffering, struggling and sinning, Satan can whisper in your ear, “God is hurting you,” or, “God is tired of you.” But Satan is a liar. God does great things. Satan wants you to run from God rather than to him. He wants you to be worrying, rather than worshipping.

What are you absolutely distressed about right now? Have you worshipped about it? A strange thing happens when we shift our focus from our problems to God’s glory. He gets bigger, which

puts our worry in perspective. That's not to say that God trivializes our suffering; on the contrary, He sympathizes with us (Heb. 4:15). But His goodness, His power, His grace, His love are large enough to absorb all of the sin and pain and heartache of the world, relieving the burdens that would crush us if we tried to carry them.

*What are you absolutely distressed about right now? Have you worshipped about it and shifted your focus from your problem to your God, who rules over it? {eoa}*

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## **A Challenge for Today's Christians to Worship More**

*"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior" (Luke 1:46-47).*

Song is a means of enjoying, honoring, recognizing and proclaiming God. Human beings were made to sing—we can all honor God through song. The first human words recorded in the book of Genesis are a song; before sin entered the world, Adam sings a song to his wife in the presence of God. The book of Revelation says we'll sing new songs in Jesus' presence

someday. We love music and even sing along in our cars when no one is listening because we were made to sing.

We also sing because our God sings. In Zephaniah 3:17, we read that a day is coming when God himself will delight over you with song. Can you imagine what it's going to be like when God sings over his people?

Later, in Luke 15:10, we read that, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Who's in the presence of the angels? God. God himself rejoices when we repent. God is happy when we repent. God sings when we repent. If God rejoices when we confess our sin and trust in Jesus, there should be rejoicing with us. If God's happy, we should be happy. If God's singing, we should be singing. If God's celebrating, we should be celebrating.

If we don't sing, it may be because we're thinking more about us than about Him. We're self-conscious, or we're thinking about our sin, not our Savior. Admittedly, singing is not always the most natural exercise for men in particular. In some cultures, the men used to sing in bars, and today they sing in stadiums if their soccer team scores a goal. But in many nations, including my own, men simply don't get together and sing. This was one of the hardest things for me when I became a Christian. My baseball team and my football team never burst into song. When my dad, my brothers, and I were out working on the car, trying to drop a transmission, we never stopped for musical interludes like some mechanic musical.

But consider this: If you're willing to leap out of your seat, raise your hands and lift your voice when something amazing happens during a sporting event, the empty tomb warrants at least that same level of joy. Jesus is a warrior-King who defeats Satan, sin, death and hell and in great love, forgives and embraces. He stands up to all of the abusers, the dictators, the evildoers and the thieves. He feeds the hungry

and gives sight to the blind. He's destroying the darkness of sin with the light of his holiness. He puts a boot on the neck of Satan. He guarantees a kingdom where there will be one throne; He'll sit on it, and we'll all be blessed.

Call it singing or call it a battle cry of victory; either way, Jesus is well worth a shout, and Jesus' mother Mary is a wonderful example of a worshipper.

*Sing to God today! Whether it's in your house, in your car or on a walk, sing to the Lord—even if you don't know how to carry a tune. {eoa}*

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## **17 Things Mary's Prophetic Song Can Teach Us About God**

*And Mary said: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. For He has regarded the low estate of His servant; surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has pulled down the mighty from their thrones and*

*exalted those of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever” (Luke 1:46-55).*

Mary’s song lists at least 17 attributes of the God she loves.

### **1. God is Lord.**

“My soul magnifies the Lord” (v. 46b). Mary’s God is the Lord, and the Lord is in charge. This is of great comfort for her as she looks at her life and her future, wondering what will happen with her fiancé, her reputation and her family. How will she feed the child? How will she raise God? Her response to these questions is: “The Lord’s in charge. I trust him.”

### **2. God is Savior.**

“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (v. 46c). Some Christian traditions believe that Mary was sinless; she was not. In this song, Mary herself expresses her need for a Savior. We’re all sinners and, like Mary, we all need a Savior.

### **3. God is omniscient.**

“He has regarded the low estate of His servant” (v. 48a). Mary describes God as omniscient, which means all-knowing. Her God knows everything. He sees her “low estate.” He knows that she is young, poor, pregnant and without a lot of resources at her disposal. He’s a Father who is attentive to the details in the lives of his sons and daughters.

### **4. God is dignified.**

“From now on all generations will call me blessed” (v. 48b). Life may not be so easy right now, but Mary sees the long view of things. She doesn’t cling to her reputation as an idol, however, and God gives Mary the dignity others do not.

## **5. God is mighty.**

“He who is mighty” (v. 49a). Mary knows that God is powerful. This doesn’t mean everything goes perfectly, life is always easy or we’ll win every single time. But it does mean as history marches forward, we know the end, and we belong to the King who wins.

## **6. God is personal.**

“He ... has done great things for me” (v. 49b). Mary celebrates that God has done great things “for me.” She describes His greatness in personal terms that reveal a God who loves not just people in general, but individual people, because He is personal and cares for us personally.

## **7. God is holy.**

“Holy is his name” (v. 49c). All He does flows from who He is. God is perfectly good. He doesn’t do evil; He only does good. Mary had difficult life circumstances but trusted in the goodness of her holy God. When circumstances are painful and people are awful, it is vital to remember that God is holy, or different altogether, only and always good.

## **8. God is merciful.**

“His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation” (v. 50). The mercy of God is mind-boggling and legacy-transforming. God is so rich in mercy that He already has it stored up, ready to pour out on your great-great-great-grandkids who will not even be born until your life on earth has long ceased.

## **9. God is worthy.**

“His mercy is on those who fear Him” (v. 50a). God deserves reverence, awe, respect, submission and obedience. Who else is going to be the center of your life and the source of your identity? Someone or something will be, but God is the only

one worthy to be revered, respected, praised, honored and loved.

**10. God is powerful.**

“He has shown strength with his arm” (v. 51a). Think of a soldier who pulls someone out of harm’s way. Think of a firefighter who drags someone out of a burning building. Think of a father who reaches into the water to pull out his drowning child. God is like that. His strong arm is like that.

**11. God is sovereign.**

“He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has pulled down the mighty from their thrones” (vv. 51b, 52a). Mary had no human or civil rights as we know them today. Most likely, she would not have been permitted to buy property or testify in court. These are aggressive words for a pregnant teenage peasant girl in a rural town.

**12. God is gracious.**

“He has exalted those of low degree” (v. 52b). He takes those who, in the world’s eyes, have little value or purpose, and He bestows on them great worth. God gives grace to those who are disgraced. God lifts up those who are beaten down. To the disregarded and discarded, God gives encouragement and exaltation.

**13. God is generous.**

“He has filled the hungry with good things” (v. 53a). Mary was poor. She knew what it was like to have hunger, but she worships a generous God who gives generously. He provides physical and spiritual nourishment.

**14. God is just.**

“The rich He has sent away empty” (v. 53b). God doesn’t let people steal and exploit forever, but He takes it away from

them in the end—and sometimes even before then. God will ultimately reclaim and redistribute all that is His—and all is His.

#### **15. God is humble.**

“He has helped his servant Israel” (v. 54a). God is humble, and He helps His people. The truth is that He doesn’t need us; we need Him. In this way, God is a Father who rejoices in helping His sons and daughters who desperately need Him.

#### **16. God is faithful.**

“He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants” (v. 55). Mary praises God for His faithfulness to generations. God honors His word. Always. If He says He is going to do something, He will do it.

#### **17. God is eternal.**

“Forever” (v. 55b). God is eternal. None of these wonderful characteristics of God will ever expire. When it comes to God, we can exuberantly say, “You are never changing.” God is not only glorious, great and good; He is “forever.”

*Which of these 17 attributes of God found in Mary’s song do you find most comforting? Why? {eoa}*

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# How Mary Worshipped With Theology

*“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*

*For He has regarded the low estate of His servant; surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has pulled down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever” (Luke 1:46-55).*

Unmarried. Poor. Young. Pregnant with God.

Mary has a lot to worry about.

Rather than worrying, however, we find her worshipping in Luke 1:46–55. Mary belts out a beautiful, spontaneous, anointed, worshipful song in response to God’s goodness and long-awaited provision. Worship encompasses all of life, but it most assuredly includes singing. Mary sings, “My soul magnifies the Lord.”

What she’s saying is that deep down, from a heart made new by the grace of God, she wants to worship the Lord. Her life may be uncertain, but she wants God to be honored and glorified because He is good even when times are hard. Her spirit and

the Holy Spirit intersect to honor Jesus—the Son in her womb—that God the Father might get praise.

Her song continues, and we see more of Mary's heart. Like all of us, she is an image-bearer of God, made to mirror God. She reflects Him beautifully in her song, which highlights the love, truth, compassion, justice, selflessness and humility of God.

Mary is a theologically astute teenage worshipper. Her lyrics are saturated with biblical language drawn from 1 and 2 Samuel, Deuteronomy, Job, the Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Habakkuk and Zephaniah—all of this despite the fact that it would have been very unusual for a woman of her age and upbringing to be formally educated. Perhaps she heard the Scriptures read to her in synagogue each Sabbath and committed them to memory. In any case, she has chosen to live her life top-down: She trusts the Scriptures, she understands who God is and she lives her life in light of that reality in the most difficult of circumstances.

*What worries or stresses does your mind drift toward throughout the day? How can you worship God and fight for joy in these moments? {eoa}*

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# How to Engage in Call-and-Response Worship With God

*And the angel answered her ..."For with God nothing will be impossible." Mary said, "I am the servant of the Lord. May it be unto me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her (Luke 1:35,37-38).*

Through the stories of Elizabeth and Mary, we see the pattern for faithful worship: God speaks and blesses; we believe and worship. God initiates; we respond. God reveals; we rejoice.

Today, God continues to speak to us by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures that He has written through his servants like Luke. When we hear from God we are to believe and respond. We are to trust Him, obey Him, love Him and follow Him.

God blesses us in that everything we have—including life itself—is a gift from Him. In addition, He has blessed us with Jesus' life and death in our place, so we can be forgiven of sin and transformed. He has blessed us with Jesus' resurrection so we can have hope for eternal life. He has blessed us with the Holy Spirit so we can have power, guidance and comfort in the present life.

Anytime we are struggling with worshipping, we must focus on remembering who God is and what God has done. As we do, our new nature prompted by the Spirit begins to respond in worship echoing back the greatness of our great God. This is precisely what we see modeled by Elizabeth, Mary and John.

*How is your worship? Do you trust God's words and appreciate God's blessings in your life? How have you responded to these gifts? {eoa}*

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## **3 Tests to Discern a True Prophetic Word**

*Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry (Luke 1:41-42b).*

We know Elizabeth spoke faithful prophecy, because the Bible tells us she was filled with the Holy Spirit. How can we tell if someone in our day speaks spiritual truth?

Ultimately, every possible Word from God must be tested by the perfect Word of God. The following points help this discernment occur:

**1. True prophecy is under biblical authority.** Prophecy isn't the highest authority; Scripture is. In Acts 17, Paul, who prophesies some of the New Testament, is teaching to an audience of Bereans. They are described as "noble" because they don't believe Paul's words until after testing them against the whole of Scripture (17:11). True prophecy is under, tested by and accountable to Scripture, and must therefore never contradict Scripture.

**2. True prophecy is under godly spiritual authority.** First

Corinthians 14 describes proper conduct for church gatherings, providing an orderly framework for prophecy under the oversight of church leadership. This isn't open mic night at the karaoke bar where anyone can jump out of the pew and take the stage. Godly leaders are responsible for "testing the spirits" (1 John 4:1) and evaluating each prophecy before it's declared publicly in order to guard the church against false prophets.

**3. True prophecy is true.** A prophet who claims to predict the future must do so with 100 percent accuracy. Anything less, the Bible says, and he or she is a false prophet. Deuteronomy 18:22 says that "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the word does not occur or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You shall not be afraid of him."

In light of the above, it is best whenever we are uncertain to walk the path of humility by saying something like, "I believe the Lord may have said this to me" or, "I would ask you to consider and examine this as I believe it may be from the Lord" rather than saying, as the prophets do a few hundred times in Scripture, "thus saith the Lord." However, in Elizabeth's case, the Spirit was so strong on her and clear through her that she prophesied perfectly. It was included in the Word of God because it was a word from God.

*The Bible resides in authority over any other prophecy or teaching. Who or what are you prone to believe and trust more than Scripture? Your friends? A particular teacher or author? Yourself? {eoa}*

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## **Biblical Proof That the Unborn Are Not Just Alive But Can Worship**

*When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy (Luke 1:41-44).*

As Mary and Elizabeth draw near one another, and with the two sons who represent the Old Covenant and the New Covenant in their wombs: the promise and the fulfillment, the prophet and the Lord. Their bellies come together—and John worships!

This is incredible.

John is in the womb, six months old, predestined by God, saved, elected, chosen, and named—all before he's ever seen the sunshine, felt the wind or breathed fresh air into his lungs. He is filled with the Holy Spirit, and we get our first glimpse of John as an in-the-womb worship leader. He is celebrating in the womb. I can't think of a stronger portrait for personhood in the womb than that. Elizabeth concludes her outstanding prophecy with these final words: "And blessed is she who believed, for there will be a completion to those

things which were told her by the Lord” (Luke 1:45).

Luke is a medical doctor, writing under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit. What does it mean when he says of Elizabeth that, “the baby leaped in her womb”? What does the Bible mean by the word “baby”?

An examination of every time Luke uses this originally Greek word for “baby” shows a consistency. In Luke 1:41a, it says, “When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb.” In Luke 1:44b, Elizabeth says, “the baby in my womb leaped for joy.” It’s the same word for baby. This is an unborn, pre-born baby: John the Baptizer.

As we keep reading, Luke 2:12 says, “You will find the Baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.” Luke 2:16 then says, “So they came hurrying and found Mary and Joseph, and the Baby lying in a manger.” The same word for “baby” is used of the newborn Jesus Christ in a manger as is used for the pre-born John the Baptizer in his mother’s womb.

In Luke 18:15–16, when Jesus is grown up, we read: “They also brought infants to Him [Jesus] that He might touch them. When the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to Him and said, ‘Permit the little children to come to Me, and do not hinder them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God.’”

The same word for John the Baptizer in Elizabeth’s womb is the same word used for Jesus lying in the manger, and it is the same word used for the children brought for Jesus to pray over.

The last occurrence from Luke is in Acts 7:19: “[The godless Pharaoh] dealt deceitfully with our people and mistreated our fathers, forcing them to put out their young children, that they might not live.” This verse is describing the infanticide that occurred while the people of Israel were enslaved in Egypt.

The same word is used for an unborn baby, a newborn baby and young children because God sees them all the same—as people bearing His image and likeness worthy of all rights and dignity. In Elizabeth’s womb is a human being made by God, bearing the image and likeness of God, deserving of all of the dignity and value we ascribe to all other human life. This shows that a baby in a womb is a baby. A baby in a womb is known by God as John was, named by God as John was, can be predestined and chosen for salvation as John was, and can be filled by the Holy Spirit as John was (Luke 1:15).

Elizabeth’s baby has a name. He is filled with the Holy Spirit. He worships. He is alive. God is the Author of life, and only He has the right to define when life begins.

Contrary to what God declares, many cultures, courts and countries try to differentiate between a newborn baby and an unborn baby. One gets full civil and human rights, but the other does not. But it is impossible to read the Bible and not see life in the womb as anything less than human being.

Of course, this is an emotional and devastating subject that haunts many who have an experience with abortion. For everyone who has participated in this act, there is grace, love, forgiveness, mercy and healing available through Jesus Christ as well as hope for an eternal reunion with their unborn child in God’s presence.

*Are you committed to the sanctity of human life? If not, are your convictions driven by God’s Word, cultural pressure or your own painful experience? {eoa}*

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## Why Children Are a Blessing From God

*In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." (Luke 1:39-45)*

Prophecy is where God chooses and uses someone to speak through them. It happens in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament and in our day.

Prophecy is sometimes foretelling the future, predicting future events. About 25 percent of our Bible was prophetic when it was written, predicting future events. Not all prophecy, however, is about what's going to happen. A declaration of truth, insight, rebuke, or encouragement can also be considered prophecy as it is a timely word from God. Sometimes, prophecy is a personal message; God wants someone to know something, so he sends a messenger to deliver a word to that individual. This is the kind of prophecy we see from

Elizabeth.

Where did Elizabeth's prophecy come from? In verse 41, Luke tells us, "Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit takes this woman and her deepest desires and brings them to life: "And she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!'" (Luke 1:42) Spirit-filled Elizabeth declares children to be a blessing. This flies in the face of modern thinking, as God's word often does. Our culture tends to treat children like a curse, causing stretch marks, sleep deprivation, and expenses to their parents. But the Bible is clear: Children are not a bane, but a blessing. As Psalm 127:3 says, "Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb a reward.

Elizabeth continues to honor Mary, which is unusual since it was customary for the younger to honor the older. And not only does she honor Mary, Elizabeth also honors Mary's baby. Elizabeth is the first person in the Bible to call Jesus Christ "Lord"! Even though he is just recently conceived, Elizabeth rejoices to enter into the presence of Jesus. The baby is the Lord, and she worships him right there in his pre-born state.

"And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Elizabeth says (Luke 1:43). She hasn't seen him walk on water, raise the dead, heal people, die on a cross, or resurrect from death—she hasn't even seen him be born. But already Elizabeth is astounded to come near Jesus, and already she worships him and claims him as her Lord. Being in the presence of the Lord was all that she and we need to be inspired to worship him.

*Do you sincerely consider children to be a blessing from the Lord? If not, why not? {eoa}*

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## **When Elizabeth Began to Prophecy**

*In those days Mary arose and quickly went into the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She spoke out with a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? Indeed, as soon as the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a completion to those things which were told her by the Lord (Luke 1:39-45).*

Mary and Elizabeth. One is young; the other is old. One is not yet married; the other has been married for many years. One is a virgin; the other is not. But both are godly women with world-changing sons in their wombs.

In the cultural day of the New Testament, women were often marginalized, particularly those who were young, poor and single, and those who were elderly, poor and childless. This

is especially true if they lived away from major urban centers and were not connected to powerful families. Mary and Elizabeth fit all of those criteria. They are among the least likely to be chosen for something significant.

As we pick up the story, we see Mary's immediate obedience to God's Word: "In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth." Elizabeth had not publicly announced that she was pregnant. She was home worshipping God, getting the nursery ready and perhaps celebrating the fact that her husband had been rendered mute for a season. And hearing about this, Mary says in essence, "Well, I've got to go see Elizabeth. I love her. We're close. We're relatives. I'm pregnant. She's pregnant. We need to share in one another's joy!"

So Mary goes on a journey of upwards of 100 miles. The specific town is not stated in the text, but the region is. This teenage girl walked about 100 miles, maybe by herself, likely in the hot sun, in danger. She apparently really wanted to see Elizabeth.

The young girl and the older woman finally reunite, "And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb." We know from previous verses that Elizabeth is about six months pregnant with a son who would grow up to be known as John the Baptizer, and Mary has just conceived Jesus by a miracle of the Holy Spirit. They come together and the Holy Spirit is present and active in the women and their wombs. John leaps in his mother's womb, and Elizabeth then begins to prophesy.

*If God did something amazing in your life, who would be the first person you wanted to share the news with? Why? {eoa}*

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## **The Protestant Case for Honoring the Virgin Mary**

*And Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well advanced in years."... Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (Luke 1:18, 34).*

In considering the life of Mary, history, theologians, traditions and agendas quickly set in. Some make far too much of Mary, and some make far too little of her.

Mary was not sinless (Luke 2:22). She did not remain a virgin forever (Matt. 1:24–25; 12:46). She is not a co-mediator or co-redeemer alongside Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). We're to pray to our Creator and not to anyone he has created.

Just because some Christian traditions have elevated Mary to an unhealthy state, however, does not mean we cannot honor her. Mary should not be our object of faith, but she should be an example of faith Martin Luther rightly said. Every man and woman should aspire to have faith like Mary's. By the grace of God, we should aspire to love God, trust God and serve Jesus as she did. We should long to have the same kind of heartfelt devotion and affection for Jesus she did. Furthermore, she is

an amazing example for everyone, especially young and single women, for what godly devotion looks like.

Small-town religious gossip can be brutal. Joseph married a single mom and adopted her son. Joseph had to deal with the fact that his boy was called illegitimate, his wife was called unfaithful, and he was called a fool for the rest of his life. He didn't have to accept this fate. Joseph would have been well within his rights to abandon Mary—technically, he could have even sought to have her stoned to death for adultery. But God told Joseph to love Mary and raise the child, and that's exactly what Joseph did.

Thanks to Joseph's humble obedience, Jesus had a dad. And Matthew 1-2 provides more details about him. For you single men reading this, do not overlook the single mothers God places in front of you as a possible wife for your consideration. It is almost certain that when Joseph sat in his youth group with his friends and compiled a list of qualities he was looking for in a wife, the virgin Joseph did not include "pregnant" on his ideal list. Yet, there is no more godly and glorious woman, wife and mother the world has ever known than Mary.

The elderly priest Zechariah met Gabriel with a question: "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well advanced in years" (Luke 1:18b). The angel responded by silencing the old man for nine months. Mary met Gabriel with a question: "How will this be, since I am a virgin" (Luke 1:34) and receive no such rebuke.

What's the difference? Mary's question is about understanding, not unbelief. Mary doesn't argue. She doesn't disagree. She doesn't try to explain to Gabriel where babies come from. She basically says, "I believe that can happen, how's it going to work?" That's a fair, honest question.

You can believe in Jesus—that he is God, that he died for your

sins, that he rose for your salvation—and still have questions. Christianity is certainly big enough, and God is certainly mysterious enough, for questions. Anselm, an ancient theologian, spoke of faith seeking understanding. We believe, and we are trying to understand.

That's the life of faith.

God can take an elderly woman like Elizabeth and open her womb. God can take a virgin like Mary and give her a son. "For with God nothing will be impossible" (Luke 1:37). Do you believe that? Do you believe it is not only true for Elizabeth, but also others, including you?

God can create everything out of nothing. God can take on human flesh and enter into human history as the man Jesus Christ. God can atone for the sin of the world on a chunk of wood. God can rise from death. God can raise us from death. God can hear and answer prayer. God can take enemies and make them friends.

Nothing is impossible with God. That's why Christians can be joyful and hopeful even amidst horror. That's why we sing and pray. Our God is a God of the impossible.

*Has God given you a script for your life that is different than the one you had in mind? How have you responded? How do you need to align yourself with his will for your life? {eoa}*

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