

Responding to God's Call With Joy—No Matter What

At 12 years old I would often think about that moment that the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, a teenager. I would wonder, *If God were looking for a "Mary" in the 20th century, would He consider me?* Was I "good enough" to be chosen as the star player for such a world-changing event? Did I have my act together well enough to be able to handle such a challenging task? Could He trust me? Would I embrace obedience as quickly and fully as teenage Mary, especially in the face of shame or the risk of being rejected? Would I be able to lay aside my own hopes and dreams to fully embrace another plan that I had never considered?

I would love to think I was strong enough, determined enough, obedient enough, but the truth is, just the part of the story with an angel appearing to me in the middle of the day would probably make me pass out! So I can understand why the Bible states in Luke's Gospel: "When she saw him, she was troubled by his words, and considered in her mind what kind of greeting this might be" (Luke 1:29).

One of the beautiful aspects of this story is that God chose a woman to ignite such a global plan, this plan of salvation for all humankind and for all generations. I would love to think that when God brought His Son into the world, He spoke to the woman first because he knew she would cover the details. In fact, I've heard it said before that if the wise men were as wise as they said they were, they would have brought a woman with them. Then there would have been a covered dish and a box of diapers, and they would have gotten there much sooner! Maybe then they would not have needed to ask for directions to complete the task. (Smile.)

When the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary in Nazareth, he told

her that she would have a significant role to play in God's plan. Just listen to this incredible statement he made to her:

"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 Listen, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son and shall call His name Jesus" (Luke 1:30-31).

Mary's response is so fitting and revealed how *the way of a woman* was deeply at work within her soul and in this moment of history. She did not cry or, like Sarah in the book of Genesis, bust out laughing. She did not run away in fear or pass out like I would have. No, she responded with a simple but womanlike question: "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" (Luke 1:34).

Mary's first concern was to know more about *the way* this phenomenal plan would unfold in her simple life. How true to form when you understand how God has designed a woman. God was obviously aware of the amazing young woman He chose. He knew that ultimately her ways would respect and honor His ways and His will without engaging in a tug-of-war. He knew that her heart would be quick to say, "I am the servant of the Lord. May it be unto me according to your word" (Luke 1:38), which is exactly why God, the great Creator and divine Designer, chose not only a woman but this particular woman to ignite His plan.

Even more amazing in this story is the painstaking care God takes to answer Mary's important question, "How will this be?" In the next few sentences of the passage, the angel patiently tells Mary more about the way in which the incarnation of Christ will take place within the hallowed confines of her womb. Clearly the angel and his communication with the woman models for every man the importance of being sensitive in communicating with a woman and to her deep need to understand the way in which things will be done. Her need for a sense of security is unmet without it.

Interestingly, the angel came to Mary first and revealed the will of God. Immediately she wrestled a bit with some confusion over the way this seemingly impossible thing could be done. The angel explained, and Mary apparently quickly accepted. And instead of hurrying to Joseph and dumping this news on him, Mary “treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19).

She's Got a Way

The magnetic push and pull of a man's will and a woman's way are legendary. One example was a popular play in 17th-century England by a playwright second only to Shakespeare, Ben Jonson. He wrote a play called *The Magnetic Lady* about a woman attracted to Captain Ironside and befriended by two characters, Compass and Needle.

Just consider a woman's way. It is a theme that has filled the world of art. There is something about the way of a woman, something recognized in Scripture but also in culture to this day. The way of a woman is so compelling that it even shows up repeatedly in our popular music. Just think of a few of the more popular song titles:

Faith Hill sings, “It's the way you love me.” Billy Joel says, “She's got a way about her.” The Temptations noted, “The way you do the things you do.” Frank Sinatra celebrated, “The way you look tonight.” Barbara Streisand sang about “the way we were.” The Beatles saw “something in the way she moves.” Clint Black sang, “A woman has her way.” Peter Frampton said, “Baby, I love your way.” Joel also affirmed that he loves her “just the way you are.” Nat King Cole spelled L-O-V-E like this: “L is for the way you look at me.”

At its best, the way of a woman can be insightful, encouraging, helpful and committed to a man and a family.

But remember, there is another side to the magnet that repels

instead of draws. While every woman has a God-graced propensity for exhibiting her way and her beauty, she also wrestles with the results of the fall, with selfishness.

There is a compelling or drawing side to the feminine magnet, to a woman's soul. But just as with the man, there is another side, one that never draws people closer; instead, it pushes them away.

At its worst, the way of a woman can be frustrating, nagging, discouraging, angry and manipulative to a man and a family.

Staying interested in life, in love, and in each other is the best way to engage the will of a man and the way of a woman. Asking questions. Staying curious. Embracing the mystery of it all. {eo}

*Excerpted from The Will of a Man and the Way of a Woman by **Robert and Pamela Crosby**.*

Pamela Crosby, a wife and mother of four young adults, serves as the Senior Director and Life Coach in The Center for Calling and Career at Southeastern University in Lakeland, FL. Pamela received her Masters of Arts in Ministerial Leadership and, along with her husband (Robert), is co-founder of , a conference and resource ministry. Pamela and Robert have served as pastors in New York, Ohio, Boston and presently in the Tampa area working with young professionals. Their newest book, The Will of a Man and the Way of a Woman, released in November 2016.