

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? {eo}

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