

2: *Experiencing God's Favor & Peace* ☆ *The Christmas Experience*

We might consider Mary to be the “Cinderella” of Scripture, not the most likely to give birth to His Majesty. So, who was this woman & what can we learn from her example? Today we find out.

"When it comes to Mary, people tend to go to one of two extremes."¹ One should be careful not to deify nor dilute Mary's role.

- **Don't dilute Mary's role**; she is "the mother of my Lord" (Luke 1:43), the one whom others would call "blessed" by God for generations to come (Luke 1:48).
- But **neither should we deify Mary**, as she was also in need of God's mercy (Luke 1:49-50), ultimately demonstrated by Jesus' death.
- We should honor Mary's obedience & follow her example as a servant of God.

Angelic Visitation

Luke 1:26–29 (NET)

²⁶ ...the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,²⁷ to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, a descendant of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one, the Lord is with you!"²⁹ But she was greatly troubled by his words and began to wonder about the meaning of this greeting.

We might consider her the Cinderella of Scripture. If we were writing the story, the Messiah wouldn't have been born in a no-name town to an insignificant teenager.

☀ **Kent Hughes** "*God bypassed Judea, Jerusalem, and the temple and came to a despised country, a despised town, and a humble woman.*"²²

A Pregnant Plan

Luke 1:30-33 (NET)

³⁰ So the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for **you have found favor with God!**
³¹ Listen: You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him **Jesus**.
³² He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and **the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David**. ³³ He will reign over the house of Jacob [Israel] forever, and **his kingdom will never end.**"

- 1) **Son's Name: Jesus:** Hebrew "Yeshua" [English: Joshua]; meaning: "Yahweh saves"
- 2) **Son's Authority:** Jesus was the **Son of God & King of Israel, forever**
- 3) **Mary's Character:** Like Noah (Gen. 6:8), Mary **found favor with God.**

BIG TRUTH GOD'S FAVOR RESTS ON THE FAITHFUL & THE HUMBLE.

Think of the names in Scripture of those who found favor with God: Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Deborah, Gideon, David, Daniel, Esther, & Mary.

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 172.

² R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, *Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 32.

Mary's Response to Miracles

Luke 1:36–38 (NET)

³⁶ “And look, your relative Elizabeth has also become pregnant with a son in her old age—although she was called barren, she is now in her sixth month!³⁷ For nothing will be impossible with God.” ³⁸ So Mary said, “Yes, **I am a servant of the Lord**; let this happen to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Mary had been molded a young woman who was a faithful & humble servant of the Lord.
Have your life lessons shaped you into a faithful & humble servant of the Lord?

Encouraging or Discouraging Words?

Psalm 31:23 (ESV)

²³ Love the LORD, all you his saints! **The LORD preserves the faithful** but abundantly repays the one who acts in pride.

Proverbs 3:34 (NET)

³⁴ Although He is scornful to arrogant scoffers, yet **He shows favor to the humble.**

☀ **N.T. Wright** says this of Mary's prayer: “*It's the gospel before the gospel, a fierce bright shout of triumph thirty weeks before Bethlehem, thirty years before Calvary and Easter.*”³

Mary's Prayer of Praise

Luke 1:46–54 (NET)

⁴⁶ And Mary said, “My soul exalts the Lord, ⁴⁷ and my spirit has begun to rejoice in **God my Savior**, ⁴⁸ because he has looked upon the humble state of his servant. For from now on all generations will call me blessed, ⁴⁹ because **he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name**; ⁵⁰ from generation to generation **he is merciful to those who fear him**. ⁵¹ He has demonstrated power with his arm; he has scattered those whose pride wells up from the sheer arrogance of their hearts. ⁵² He has brought down the mighty from their thrones, and has **lifted up those of lowly position**; ⁵³ he has **filled the hungry with good things**, and has sent the rich away empty. ⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel, remembering his mercy, ⁵⁵ as he promised to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

God has been faithful to us. Will we be faithful to Him? Every person needs a new heart with the desire & ability to, like Mary, be **a servant of the Lord**. God used this same language in Ezekiel (36:26–27). This still occurs today. Walk away from sin & bow to your Savior - God takes our sin & gives us the righteousness of Jesus! (2 Cor. 5:17-21)



1. **Be faithful.** Live like God is near when you're tempted to act like He's not.
2. **Be humble.** Serve another without lingering for recognition.

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* WEEK 2 VIDEO - search “Christmas Experience” on RightNowMedia.org