



The first car I owned was a 1980 VW Rabbit—a diesel. Big mistake. That car was a piece of junk and it died in the middle of an intersection the first summer Karen and I were married. So the next time she was talking to her step dad on the phone, she told him “The rabbit died.” He about dropped the phone. Many of you are too young to know that “the rabbit died” is another way of saying you are pregnant. She wasn’t, but the Rabbit really did die. It went to Volkswagen heaven. Or maybe it was the other place.

There’s nothing more exciting than the birth of a newborn. Couples continue to get creative when it comes to baby announcements and this new thing—gender reveals. Will it be a boy or a girl? I recently saw [this video](#) that has an interesting twist on how to announce whether the baby is going to be a boy or a girl.

I don’t care how creative you could ever get with baby announcements, in the history of the world, no birth announcement will be more awesome than Mary’s. After all, none other than the angel Gabriel appeared to her to announce the supernatural, divine conception and birth of the God man Jesus. That one stands in a class all by itself.

This morning as we celebrate Mother’s Day, I plan to focus on Mary and her response to all that was happening to her. There’s a strange thing about Mary because evangelicals tend to be afraid of her. And for good reason, as she has been corrupted by the Catholic Church. They teach that not only did she give birth to Jesus through a virgin birth but that she herself was born of a virgin birth. They pray to Mary and call her mediator or co-mediator with Christ. She is very distorted and therefore the gospel message is very distorted. As a result, evangelicals have tended to shy away from Mary somewhat so as not to appear to ever emphasize her too much. But when appropriate, we need to rediscover her faith and life. I have never heard a Mother’s Day message focused on Mary but who better to model our lives after than the most famous mother in human history.



41 And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, 42 and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 And why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. 45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

46 And Mary said,

“My soul magnifies the Lord,

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;

49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

50 And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with his arm;

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate;

53 he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,

in remembrance of his mercy,

55 as he spoke to our fathers,

to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

As I have said before, Mother’s Day sermons tend to be flowery and encouraging for mothers while Father’s Day sermons are an excuse to beat up on dads and tell them how horrible they are. That’s an exaggeration but it’s partly true. Moms, this message will fit more under the challenge arena than just pure encouragement. But I trust that the challenge we see in the life of Mary will also be an encouragement to you. Those two things should also go together.

1. A mom who believes what the Lord says.

The first principle comes from Elizabeth’s mouth. “And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.” Before the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary he appeared to Zechariah to announce the miraculous birth of John the Baptist. It was not a virgin birth but it was still miraculous. When he heard the news, he asked Gabriel a simple question. “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” (Luke 1:18)

Now compare his response to Mary’s response. “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” (Luke 1:34) You really can’t tell the difference, can you? Each of them implies that this is an impossible thing due to the impossible nature of the promise. But Zechariah is struck mute for nine months but Mary is not. Why? Thankfully, Luke tells us the reason.

Zechariah had a lack of faith. “And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.” (Luke 1:20) But Mary expressed faith. “And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

Mary had faith but Zechariah did not. It’s as simple as that. She believed that she would give birth, through a virgin conception, to the Savior of the world. But that was not the extent of her faith.

The Lord was her Savior
God is sovereign over thrones and kingdoms
God is merciful and exalts the humble
God keeps his covenant/promises
God’s salvation plan

We know that Mary was probably still a teenager when she received the visit from the angel. How did she come to believe all of these wonderful and in some cases, impossible truths? One of this week’s Table Talk questions was, “How did Mary know all of these things about the Lord?” The answer is quite obvious. She studied and memorized Scripture.

2. A mom who studies and memorizes the Scriptures.

Mary’s words have been given the title of Magnificat which is the Latin word for magnifies. It is poetic. It is beautiful language for sure, but what we often miss is how thoroughly it is steeped in Old Testament truth and theology. There are at least seven direct quotes or obvious allusion to the Old Testament

46 And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
My heart exults in the Lord;
my horn is exalted in the Lord. (1 Samuel 2:1)

48 for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.
For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly (Psalm 138:6)

For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
49 for he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
50 And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

**And his mercy is upon generation after generation
toward those who fear him.** (Psalm 103:17)

51 He has shown strength with his arm;
the right hand of the Lord does valiantly! (Psalm 118:16)

he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;
52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;
he sets on high those who are lowly, (Job 5:11)

53 he has filled the hungry with good things,
He has filled the hungry with good things (Psalm 107:9)

and the rich he has sent away empty.

54 He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
55 as he spoke to our fathers,
to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”

**And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you
throughout their generations** for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your
offspring after you. (Genesis 17:7)

It's obvious that Mary learned these truths from the Old testament but how did she do this since unlike you and me, Mary did not have a Bible. There was usually only one scroll at each synagogue. Most learning was done by listening to someone read Scripture or by listening to the rabbis teach. It was an oral culture. Women were limited in what they could do but they were not completely excluded. “Ancient Jewish sources from the land of Israel and from the Diaspora show that women frequented the synagogue and studied in the beit midrash (study hall).”¹

My point is that not only was Mary a student of the Scriptures, but it would have been that much more difficult for her to have learned and memorized it. She made extra efforts to do so. We can

read the Bible on our phones while standing in line at the grocery store. It's so much easier for us but many moms do not have much of a habit of taking in the Word. And remember, this lifetime of studying the Scriptures is what developed her faith to accept the impossible. God chose Mary. God chose Mary out of all the women in Israel and ordained that she would be a young woman living in Nazareth. God sovereignly worked out the circumstances but he also chose her because her faith was grown by years of bathing in His Word.

Please do not forget that any kind of study in God's word is not the end goal but rather a means to an end. This is why we used the language of "Means of Grace" in our discipleship brochure. There are multiple ways you can take in the Word of God. At this past Thursday's LEAD we practiced praying through Scripture after we studied the passage first. I think those who attended found it to be very meaningful. All believers pray but very few pray using the Bible. But however you take the Word into your life, that's never the goal. It's a means to a greater goal, a greater end. That's why we call them a means of grace. It's a means to experiencing God's grace in countless ways. This grace resulted in great faith for Mary which allowed her to believe the miracle that was told to her. It can have the same impact on anyone.

3. A mom whose faith is evident to others.

I love the fact that we learn about Mary's faith from Elizabeth. "And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord." This means that her faith was evident to others. And she would need this rock solid faith as she would soon face the jeers of her small town and even her own family.

But this principle is just common sense, isn't it? Anyone who would have such a faith, her faith would be evident to others. This is the power of a transformed life. Now in fairness, we never get a picture of Mary's struggles, other than watching her grieve over her son on the cross. We have no glimpses into her daily routine and all of its challenges. The Proverbs 31 woman is often preached about on Mother's Day. The Proverbs 31 woman is the idyllic woman and her life is described in the Bible for good reason. Of course the so-called Proverbs 31 woman wasn't a real woman at all. She is poetic list of Proverbs. She is a literary masterpiece. She is an elegant way of pulling together a string of excellent principles for a Godly woman. We don't get to see her struggles either.

So it is with the mothers in this room. I know you would all like your faith to be evident to others all the time. But there are days and moments when that just doesn't happen—when there are things evident in your life, but it doesn't look like faith. I'm sure it happened to Mary as well. Don't be discouraged by the down moments but do celebrate the day to day victories.

4. A mom who worships the Lord.

Mary began with worship.

My soul magnifies the Lord,

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior

The entire Magnificat is really a song of praise. All of it is worship. The more you examine her song of praise the more one is amazed at her tender age. Mary was just a teenager. She was probably sixteen years old at the most. The fact is that a woman's age does not have to determine

her spiritual maturity. I think we all know or have known some remarkably mature young men and women who are very spiritually mature.

One such person was Jonathan Edward's wife. Upon first seeing 13-year-old Sarah, the 20-year-old Jonathan wrote these words:

"They say there is a young lady from New Haven who is beloved of that almighty Being, who made and rules the world, and that there are certain seasons in which this great Being, in some way or other invisible, comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, and that she hardly cares for anything, except to meditate on him—that she expects after a while to be received up where he is, to be raised out of the world and caught up into heaven; being assured that he loves her too well to let her remain at a distance from him always. There she is to dwell with him, and to be ravished with his love, favor and delight, forever."

He continued his praise, describing Sarah as possessing "a strange sweetness in her mind, and sweetness of temper, uncommon purity in her affections," that gave her a "calmness and universal benevolence of mind; especially after those times in which this great God has manifested himself to her mind."²

To all twelve, thirteen and fourteen year old girls—be encouraged. Mary is a model for you. You can rise above your peers and follow hard after the Lord.

5. A mom who is humble and reverent.

Mary had a reverent fear of the Lord.

50 And his mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.

51 He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;

52 he has brought down the mighty from their thrones
and exalted those of humble estate;

53 he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

Thirty years ago, a young mom named Pam was told by her doctor to abort her baby. There were complications with the pregnancy that were endangering her health. The physician said the baby was similar to a tumor – which is to say, not a person – that should be removed. Like the unborn child was a disease.

Pam and her husband were both missionaries and they both feared the Lord, so they never hesitated to choose life. If they had aborted, the world would have been denied a Heisman Trophy winner and a sports personality who has inspired millions with his faith and his witness for life.³ His name is Tim Tebow and his mom did not hesitate to do the right thing.

6. A mom who passes on faith to her children.

50 And his mercy is for those who fear him

from generation to generation.

If you can trace your faith back more than one generation, consider yourself very fortunate. That's the way it is supposed to happen. This is how it was with Timothy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well. (1 Timothy 1:3)

But sometimes saving faith can skip a generation or more. Children raised in Christian homes can become bored with their faith. It's the faith of their parents and never really becomes their own. This is always the personal decision of the children but moms and dads have a huge impact on the end result.

One of the most powerful tools that moms have is genuine humility. Your children already know that you are not perfect so the more you admit that to them, the better off everyone will be. All of these principles relate to passing on your faith.

I realize that Mother's Day can be difficult for some moms. You may have a strained relationship with your mother or with your own children, so the celebration is not what you would hope it would be. You may miss your mom because she is no longer with you. John Piper has a sermon called "Motherhood is a Call to Suffer." That is true but I hope that you can gain some encouragement from Mary's example.

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¹ Shmuel Safrai, "Were Women Segregated in the Ancient Synagogue." *Jerusalem Perspective*, July-Sept. 1997, 34.

² <https://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/those-exceptional-edwards-women/>

³ <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/pam-tebow-never-tires-of-spreading-the-pro-life-message>