



“Heart” Matters: A Look at Mary

By Shari Miller

[For Bible study leader notes and Bible passages, click on the Quarterly icon at www.lwml.org or contact the LWML Office.]

Introduction

Have you ever wondered about the relationship between Jesus and His mother Mary? Share your thoughts in small groups or with the entire group.

Opening Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, we rejoice and thank

You for creating us and making us Your children through the waters of Holy Baptism. We confess that we sin daily and destroy our relationship with You. Thank You for the forgiveness we have because of Your Son's own victory over death. Because of His resurrection, we, too, look forward to eternal life in heaven with You! Please send Your Holy Spirit to be with us today as we study Your Word. In Jesus' great name we pray. Amen.

A Faithful Heart

Read **Luke 1:26–38**.

Choose one or more of the following and discuss in small groups or with the entire group.

Mary's initial reaction to the angel's appearance (verses 26–33) might have been:

- | | | |
|----------|--------------|--------------|
| A. Fear | B. Confusion | C. Doubt |
| D. Faith | E. Concern | F. Curiosity |

What question does Mary ask Gabriel in verse 34? Is this a question you would have asked? Why or why not?

What truths about Jesus are emphasized by the angel in verses 35 and 37?

Conceived by the _____

Born of the _____

The _____ of the Most _____ is at work

Called the _____ of _____

Jesus' conception and birth will be a miracle. Nothing is _____ with God!

Gabriel announced to Mary that she would have a miracle child who already had a name and a mission. For many people, this departure from the ordinary expectations of life would have been too much to believe. Often, we think we know how things are supposed to go, and we are not much interested in things that do not fit into our plan. Yes, Mary had questions, and she was not hesitant to ask, “But how can this be?” However, Mary's heart was faithful; her faith had been nurtured by hearing the Word of God in regular worship. She knew God was able to do great things, because she knew Scripture and the history of God's love and care for His people throughout previous generations.

In your own words, what is Mary's response to the angel in verse 38?

If time permits: How would **you** (honestly!) respond if an angel were to reveal God's plan for your life?

- Ask a lot of questions
- Wonder if I had any say about it
- Rejoice that God could use me
- Worry about my ability to carry it out
- Run away scared
- Rather not know about the future; prefer to be surprised

What do the following Bible passages indicate about Mary's (and Joseph's) intent to nurture godly faith in her very special Child?

Luke 2:21–24; 39–40

Luke 2:41–42

Read **Psalm 51:10–12**. What are the means of grace that the Holy Spirit uses to give us new hearts and nurture our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord? See **1 Thessalonians 2:13; Romans 6:4; Mark 14:22–24**.

Faith Talk: Complete one of the following statements, and share in small groups or with the entire group.

When I was young, the Holy Spirit nurtured my faith through these people ...

I will nurture in those I love the saving faith of Jesus Christ as Savior by ...

A Devoted Heart

Read **Luke 1:36** and **39–45**.

Why did the angel tell Mary about Elizabeth in verse 36? What would the visit to Elizabeth have accomplished for Mary?

Mary responded to Elizabeth's greeting with The Magnificat (Mary's Song, "My soul magnifies the Lord") in **verses 46–55**. What specific phrases reveal Mary's devotion to her Lord God?

Read **Luke 2:1–20**. Mary was a devoted mother. She had accompanied her husband on a strenuous journey in the very last month of her pregnancy. We must assume that she took proper physical care of herself so that the birth was a healthy one. She had her long-awaited Child in a town far from home in crude surroundings. How did Mary respond to the birth of her Child and the subsequent visit from the shepherds in **verse 19**?

How would you define the word *ponder*? Look up a dictionary definition.

What other words could have the same meaning?

Read **Matthew 2:13–15**. How does this account further show Mary's devotion to the safety of her Child?

If time permits: **Matthew 13:54–56** gives a brief glimpse into Jesus' family life. **John 2:12** further indicates that Jesus spent time with his family.

What were the names of Jesus' half-brothers?

What kinds of activities do you think Jesus might have enjoyed with them and His sisters?

Faith Talk: Share in small groups or with the entire group specific activities that can serve as an example to those you love of *your* devotion to the Lord.

A Believing Heart

Read **John 2:1–11**. What does this account likely reveal about Mary's belief in her Child as her Lord and Savior?

How was the prophecy of Simeon in **Luke 2:34–35** fulfilled for Mary in **John 19:25–27** and **30**?

Read **John 20:3–10**. It could be assumed that John went home after witnessing the empty tomb and told those in his household what he had seen. Since Mary was now in his household, she might have heard the Good News of Jesus' resurrection very quickly! Describe some of the probable feelings that Mary (the mother of Jesus) might have had during the days between her Child's death and the news of His resurrection.

Read **Acts 1:13–14**. What did Mary do after Jesus' resurrection from the dead?

What do the following passages say about the relationship between a mother and her child? How were these traits demonstrated in Mary's relationship with Jesus?

Psalm 139:13

Song of Solomon 8:2a

Ephesians 6:1–3

1 Thessalonians 2:7–8

If time permits: Think of biblical examples of mothers who shared their faith with their children.

Faith Walk: Identify someone in your life who needs to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Resolve to share this message with that person this week.

Closing Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for giving us the gift of Your own Son Jesus Christ. We praise You that our sins are forgiven and we have eternal life because of His death and resurrection. Give us *faithful* Spirit-filled hearts that read Your Word and participate in Your Sacraments. Give us *devoted* hearts that cling to You in both good times and bad. Give us *believing* hearts that are surrounded with Your power and love. Be with our family and friends and keep them in the one true faith. Open opportunities for us to witness about the salvation in Jesus to those who don't know You. All this we are bold to pray in the great name of Jesus! Amen.

Sing "Go, My Children, with My Blessing" (*LSB* 922). Speak the words of the last verse together.

[**Additional:** A musical version of Mary's *Magnificat* could be shared on CD or sung together from *LSB* 933. Have a movie night and watch "The Nativity Story" after doing this study. See the Spring 2009 *Lutheran Woman's Quarterly* archives for further study on motherhood, "Mothers Undaunted: Naomi, Hannah, Deborah."]

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