

Mary: Loving God

“If I give up the fulfillment of a career to make my children’s lives better, and stay up all night sewing costumes or baking cookies on short notice, but grumble about lack of sleep, I have not love and accomplish nothing.

“A loving mother is patient with her children’s immaturity and kind even when they are not; a loving mother is not jealous of their youth, nor does she hold it over their heads whenever she has sacrificed for them. A loving mother does not push her children into doing things her way. She is not irritable when the chicken pox have kept her confined with three whining children for two weeks, and does not resent the child who brought the affliction home in the first place.

“A loving mother is not relieved when her disagreeable child finally disobeys her directly and she can punish him, but rather rejoices with him when he is being more cooperative. A loving mother bears much of the responsibility for her children; she believes in them; she hopes in each one’s individual ability to stand out as a light in a dark world; she endures every backache and heartache to accomplish that.

“A loving mother never really dies. As for home-baked bread, it will be consumed and forgotten; as for spotless floors, they will soon gather dust and heel marks. And as for children, well, right now toys, friends, and food are all-important to them, but when they grow up it will have been how their mother loved them that will determine how they love others. In that way she will live on.

“So care, training, and a loving mother reside in a home, these three, but the greatest of these is a loving mother.”¹

As we continue our study of a loving mother, we are looking at the life of Mary, the mother of Jesus and of James. Last week we saw that what made Mary great was that she was sought out by God, she was humble, she partook of God’s grace, and when given an incredible ministry opportunity she submitted to God’s will. From her life, we see such a clear picture of how we can love God and others with all our hearts.

How to Be a Loving Mother

Mary experienced God: “Then Mary said to the angel, ‘How can this be, since I do not know a man?’ And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the son of God. . . . For with God nothing will be impossible’ (Luke 1:34–37). Mary would not even consider anything immoral. Instead she was surrounded by the Shekinah glory of God as God the Son entered her womb. God doing the impossible in and through us is what our lives for Him are all about.

Mary served God joyfully as the Lord’s servant: “ ‘I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said.’ Then the angel left her” (Luke 1:38 NIV). Wow, what a submissive and godly attitude. Do you want to love God with all your heart? Then you need to regularly say, “I am your servant, Lord. Do to me according to Your will.” Mary was willing to endure great personal sacrifice in order to be a blessing to others. She accepted God’s will for her life and joyfully went off to be a blessing to her cousin Elizabeth who had not even told Mary her big news yet!

Mary immersed herself in the Scriptures: Her praise to the Lord recorded in Luke 1:46–55 is evidence of her deep knowledge of the Scriptures. Have you paused to ask yourself how she became the one chosen by God? For starters, think on this: In the world where Mary lived every drop of water was carried home by women from springs or wells in clay pots. Every ounce of flour was ground with a stone mill. Every bread loaf was baked in an oven with a wood fire burning to heat it. All dishes were washed with water that was hauled (remember the well, the pot, the walk). So time was at a premium. What’s new, right? But in her day, women were not at a premium. Jesus was the first to elevate women to their proper place. In Mary’s time they were close to being furniture. Her knowledge of the Scriptures may have come from her dad who Luke tells us was named Heli. (Luke 3:23–38 traces Mary back to Adam to show Jesus was Savior of the world. Matthew 1 traces Joseph back to Abraham to show Jesus was the Messiah of the Jews.) Maybe Heli encouraged his daughter by exposing her deeply to the Scriptures. What a wonderful pursuit for any dad. Whatever the means, Mary had a heart that sought after God!

Mary was a woman who learned her manners from the Word of God. If we were to look over her shoulder as she read from the scrolls and listened to God’s truth, we might learn what made her tick! One thing we can be sure of, as a descendant of David and Solomon, she would have read the portions of God’s Word they were inspired to write. Look with me at Proverbs 14:1: “The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands.”

What a contrast! The wise woman is a builder of a godly home. She is a model of godly conduct. The foolish woman is a destroyer. That is what the words “tear down” mean. She destroys her home, her family, and eventually her own life. Word by word and person by person, her evil stifles, chokes, and eventually destroys people and relationships. What is her outcome? Look back at Proverbs 11:29: “He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind, and the fool *will be* servant to the wise of heart.”

There is a classic American tale, *Gone with the Wind*, that so vividly portrays this idea. The movie is based on Margaret Mitchell’s novel about a slice of Southern living in the strife-torn Civil War era. It was a life nearly oblivious to the world around it. It was a vividly selfish, indulgent life. The central character is well known to us—the enticing southern belle, Scarlet O’Hara, was a cunning and crafty woman who knew what she wanted and always tried to get it. Her self-centeredness is in stark contrast to the servant-hearted Melanie. So too Solomon, under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, contrasts the selfish and indulgent foolish woman in Proverbs 7 to the sweet and selfless wise woman in Proverbs 31. Mary would have applied herself to these portions of Scripture in order to cultivate godliness like the woman in Proverbs 31 and avoid the pitfalls of the Proverbs 7 woman.

Mary never stopped growing spiritually; she was sensitive to God: “But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19 NIV). Where did Luke get all this material he recorded in his two volume work on the first century event that changed the world? All was given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but some came from the hard work of interviewing the witnesses. Yes, every word of God’s Word is inspired (inerrant, infallible, pure, and divine), but each one came from

somewhere. I think these words were from Mary after a long time of pondering (literally means “to put together”) all that God had done.

What made Mary such a model for all women throughout the ages?

- Mary listened to God.
- Mary humbled herself before God.
- Mary said yes to God’s grace.
- Mary surrendered to God’s will.
- Mary experienced God.
- Mary served God joyfully.
- Mary immersed herself in the Scriptures.
- Mary never stopped growing spiritually.

¹ Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *You and Your Child, Bible Study* (Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1986).