3 MARY'S TRUST

What are some things you always trust to work?

QUESTION #1

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THE POINT

Embrace God's call on your life.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

Let's admit it, we interact with things every day we're clueless about, but we trust them anyway. Perhaps one of these applies to you:

- Many of us don't understand how an internal combustion engine works, but we still trust our cars to get us around.
- You may not comprehend electricity with its ohms, amps, volts, and watts, but you still turn the lights on.
- The technology behind cell phones and Wi-Fi befuddles most of us, yet we still log on and send a text or an email.

I felt clueless in college. I did not even know what a "major" was, but I felt the pressure to figure out what I wanted to do for the next fifty years. I was clueless, but I asked God to show me what He was engineering for my life. I asked and I trusted.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, surely didn't understand what was about to happen in her life, but she trusted. We see in her experience that, even without fully comprehending everything in God's plan, we can trust and embrace what He wants us to do.

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WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Luke 1:26-30

[26] In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, [27] to a virgin engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. [28] And the angel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you." [29] But she was deeply troubled by this statement, wondering what kind of greeting this could be. [30] Then the angel told her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Fear came upon Mary with the arrival of the angel Gabriel. Angels are God's servants that in many cases deliver important messages. In fact the word "angel" means "messenger." Gabriel is one of the few angels named in the Bible. Gabriel delivered messages to Daniel (see Dan. 8:16-26; 9:21-27) and Zechariah the priest (see Luke 1:11-20), but surely his greatest message was to Mary.

Gabriel's initial message wasn't complex, but it was confusing. "Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you." I'm sure most of us would be startled—even afraid—if an angel confronted us with such a message. Mary apparently was no exception, since Luke's account reported, "she was deeply troubled by this statement." But then Gabriel told her, "Do not be afraid, Mary."

Obviously God had bestowed a special honor on Mary. Why else would He send an angel to tell her God was with her? For many of us, knowing God is present can be a comfort; while for others, the presence of God might justifiably cause them to tremble with fright. Mary, though, was troubled because she did not know *why* she was favored or blessed with the presence of God.

The reason Mary did not need to be afraid was because she had "found favor with God." To find favor with God means to be "full of grace." This phrase clearly portrays Mary as a recipient of God's grace. Some have erroneously made Mary to be a *dispenser* of grace, though she was in need of it herself.

How has God calmed your fears?

QUESTION #2

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And thankfully, it can now be said of all who have accepted God by faith and have become His children that we also are full of grace. Paul used the same Greek word when he wrote that, because we are adopted into God's family through Christ, we have received "his glorious grace that he lavished on us in the Beloved One" (Eph. 1:6).

God's gracious presence should dispel any fear. Fear wants to cripple us and have the last word in our lives, but God's presence wins over fear every time. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment" (2 Tim. 1:7).

Luke 1:31-34

31 Now listen: You will conceive 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 forever, and his kingdom will have no end." 34 Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?"

Gabriel's next words made it clear how God had favored Mary. She would give birth to "the Son of the Most High." My dad was a seminary professor. As a kid, I would go to the seminary's recreational facility and people noticed my resemblance to my father. It was an honor to be his son, but it didn't exactly get me a nicer towel, a free snack, or a better ball at the recreation center.

But Jesus' relationship with His heavenly Father gives Him rich benefits. Jesus' Father is the "Most High" God. Mary could not have missed the powerful significance of hearing those words. This term coveys the power, strength, and authority of God. This term also shows us that Jesus' divine sonship is linked to His messiahship; therefore, He is equal with God. (See Phil. 2:6.) It also reminds us that Jesus has the same nature as God the Father.

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SIMPLE TRUST

Which of the following images best communicate trust to you?

When have you seen someone place his or her trust in God in a difficult situation?

How did their testimony affect you?

"It is a great deal easier to do that which God gives us to do, no matter how hard it is, than to face the responsibilities of not doing it."

—J.R. MILLER

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THE POINT

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Mary's child would be royalty. "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end." Jesus' kingdom is divine and will last for all eternity. The promises may have reminded Mary of God's promise to David: "Your house and kingdom will endure before me forever, and your throne will be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16).

Mary did not doubt this amazing announcement, but she did have questions. Mary was confusion because she thought the angel was describing a normal conception from an act she and Joseph had engaged in. Since she knew she and Joseph had not consummated their marriage, she asked for clarification. "How can this be, since I have not had sexual relations with a man?"

Six months earlier, Mary's relative, Zechariah (the father of John the Baptist) asked Gabriel a seemingly similar question, but it was the wrong question. Have you ever asked someone a wrong question? Maybe you unintentionally insulted someone with your question. Maybe you displayed an unbecoming attitude as you asked. Sometimes it's not the content of our words but our tone or attitude that is not right. We've all seen how the wrong question can elicit a very negative response.

Mary asked, "How can this be?" but Zechariah had asked, "How can I know this?" (Luke 1:18). Even though Zechariah used similar words to Mary's words, his question came with a different attitude. Zechariah wanted a confirming sign, but Mary asked for insight. And as we will see in the next verses, her question was born of trust.

How have you learned to trust God's plan for your life?

QUESTION #3

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Luke 1:35-38

35 The angel replied to her: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 And consider your relative Elizabeth—even she has conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called childless. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 "I am the Lord's servant," said Mary. "May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel left her.

What do you appreciate about the angel Gabriel's response to Mary?

QUESTION #4

The angel's answer to Mary's question described the creative work of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." *Overshadow* carries the sense of the holy, powerful presence of God. God's mighty presence was sufficient to sustain Mary and bring about the virgin birth. Creatively, the Holy Spirit brought the physical conception of Jesus.

This news was truly amazing—and miraculous. Mary gave no hint of doubt; nevertheless, Gabriel reminded Mary of the mighty power of God to do anything He so desires: "For nothing will be impossible with God."

Mary responded to the God of the impossible with words that can only be described as beautiful. "'I am the Lord's servant,' said Mary. 'May it be done to me according to your word.'" Mary saw her primary calling as one of submission and obedience to the Lord. By claiming to be the Lord's servant, she was voluntarily giving up her rights to control her life.

How can we live like nothing is impossible with God?

QUESTION #5

Mary didn't understand everything, but she trusted—and she obeyed. In humble submission, Mary was now ready to serve God and follow His will. Her attitude was all the more amazing when we realize Mary would have been in an extremely embarrassing and difficult situation because of this news. Mary surely understood she most likely would have been accused of adultery, yet she still graciously submitted to the will of God. This attitude of willful submission to God should also permeate our lives.

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THE POINT *Embrace God's call on your life.*

LIVE IT OUT

God has a call of obedience for each of us. How can you practically embrace God's call on your life? Consider these suggestions:

- **Commit.** Commit your fears to God. Write a list of fears you struggle with. One by one, prayerfully commit them to the Lord.
- **Obey.** If you feel you're facing an impossible situation, maybe there's a step of obedience that needs to be your first step. Meditate on the verse: "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37).
- **Serve.** Mary's response was one of a servant. Do you see yourself as a servant of God? Ask God to open your eyes to a way you can serve someone. Look for ways to live out your calling by yielding your rights and living as God's servant.

There are circumstances in life that will certainly catch us by surprise. It's good to know that the One in whom we trust is never caught off guard. He can be trusted with our lives!

My thoughts

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