



family matters

a mother of God's choice

day 1 — READ *Luke 1:26-30*

grace

Why did God choose Mary? Part of the answer is that He graced her for no good reason. None of us *deserves* to be chosen; He just chooses us. Unfortunately, it's easy to take His grace for granted. For example, the simple fact that you're reading this means that you live and breathe and have eyesight and an education and some knowledge of who Jesus is.

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READ *Ephesians 1:4-6 & 2:8-10*

NOTICE how God chooses each of us and for what purposes. UNDERLINE the phrases. JOURNAL your thoughts on these verses. REFLECT on some other ways that God graces you. THANK Him for each of those gifts.

day 2 — READ *Luke 1:38; John 2:5b*

a servant

Even though Mary was graced by God, there are character qualities that she possessed that made her a great candidate. The concept of a servant is sometimes difficult to grasp in this day and age; we can be so independent. But when there's a mutual respect between an employee/employer, servant/master or child/parent, you'll find that each is working for the well being of the other. That's God's intention, and He found that willingness in Mary. She was willing to do what God asked of her because she was confident of His love for her. Her life was meaningful in relationship to God. She was ok with Him calling the shots. She trusted Him. He was truly LORD in her life.

Mary's devotion begs the questions: *Am I willing to "do what He says?"* Do I trust easily? Do I want God calling the shots? Is He working in my best interest? Do I have a hard time letting go of control? WRITE down your answers. Even further, DISCUSS these questions with someone today.

day 3 — READ *Luke 1:48; Philippians 2:1-4*

humility

Humility can most easily be explained this way—the recognition that God is in control, and you're not any better than anyone else. It's not that you put yourself down or have nothing to offer the world. You just see that Jesus is the main character in the story, and you have a tiny supporting role. All that is good in you is a gift from God. "Rather, in humility value others above yourselves." NOTE some the gifts God has given you. LIST some ways that you can serve others with your gifts. PICK at least one, and HELP someone this week.

day 4 — READ *Luke 1:47; Nehemiah 8:10*

joy

Life isn't always smooth sailing, but how do you find joy in those times? Imagine Mary's circumstances. She's engaged to Joseph, but it's not his child she carries! The custom of the day said she should be stoned to death, so she's carrying a secret that could destroy her. Even as she feels like a sheep among wolves, she takes this reprieve with her cousin where she can be at ease and be joyful with someone who understands the miracle of the moment. What a gift this time is to her! How can she carry such a heavy secret all the other days? Nehemiah gives the answer — "the joy of the Lord is your strength." The secret to sailing in choppy waters is to find the moments to rejoice. Sometimes we get to rejoice with a friend, but often we have to rejoice with God in secret.

If you're looking for joy in a spouse, a friend, a child, more stuff, entertainment or a job, you'll eventually be disappointed. All of those things are fleeting and inconsistent. When you find your joy in relationship to God with rejoicing and appreciation, then your joy will last. MAKE a list of the things you're thankful for this day. REJOICE with Him in secret.

day 5 — READ *Luke 1:45-55*

honor

Can we be people who honor God in the same way Mary honored Him?

- BELIEVE the Lord (v.45)
- PRAISE the Lord (v. 46)
- RECOGNIZE God (v. 49)
- HAVE a high view of God who is...
 - holy (v. 49) • merciful (v. 50) • all powerful (v. 51)
 - just (v. 51b-52) • good (v. 53) • unchanging (v. 55b)

How often do you recognize God or praise God? How do you *practice* believing the Lord? What is your view of God? JOURNAL and PRAY about some of God's qualities that amaze you today.

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