



I Surrender My Children

Key Passages: *Matthew 1:18-28; Luke 2:22-52; Matthew 2:1-23*

"What if?" is a nickname one of my mother's best friends has affectionately bestowed upon my mama. Admittedly, it is most fitting. I can remember hearing that phrase countless times as a child. "*Stay near me in the grocery store... what if some old man tries to kidnap you?*" (some old man is another one of her phrases) "*Don't lick that cake batter spoon! What if you end up with salmonella from the raw eggs?*"

Unfortunately, I seem to have inherited the *what if* gene. I, too, struggle with my mind always rushing to the worst-case scenario. Just recently, as we were leaving my son's peewee football game, my eyes couldn't find his five-year old brother in the stands. I had my six year-old by the hand, and when moments passed without seeing him, I felt the panic rise and the *what ifs* start. *What if* he had fallen from the top of the bleachers and onto the concrete? *What if* some old man kidnapped him? (There's that gene cropping up again.) These and seemingly hundreds more horrible possibilities ran through my mind. In a few more moments, my husband and I spotted him, happily munching popcorn with a preschool buddy.

El Roi (the God Who Sees)

While I still struggle with letting go of my *what ifs*, I have found the more I learn about who God is, the more I am able to surrender my children to Him. Our women's Sunday School class is currently studying *Lord, I Want to Know You* by Kay Arthur. This study has been life-changing for me as we are learning the names of God in order to learn more about His character. One of the names that has struck a chord with me and helped me battle my *what if* tendencies is *El Roi*, the God who sees. "The omnipresent God is there and His eyes are not shut. He isn't asleep unaware of all the circumstances. He sees" (Chapter 4. In *Lord, I Want to Know You*, 29).

As our children grow, they spend more and more time out of our sight. They will go to camp, sleepovers, amusement parks, and on road trips. I will not be there to see every move they make. However, I am learning to trust in my *El Roi*. I am thankful to have learned the eyes of the Lord are in every place (Proverbs 15:3).

One biblical mother who may have had to deal with her own share of *what ifs* is Mary, mother of our Lord. From her pregnancy throughout the childhood, teen, and young adult years of her

beloved Son, I can think of many *what ifs*. *What if* Joseph breaks our betrothment and I am left to raise this child alone? *What if* King Herod succeeds in his plot to kill the Messiah? *What if* danger has befallen the 12 year-old Jesus who has been missing for three days? However, in every situation, we find Mary trusting a God who could see what she couldn't.

First, even before she conceived, Mary trusted her child to the Lord. Some of you may be unmarried, but God may have marriage and children in your future. Trust God with them today. Maybe some of you are still praying and hoping to conceive. Our God is the *God who sees*. *El Roi* sees every tear you have shed. Depend on Him with your future. Let's look at how Mary surrendered all, even surrendering her child before He was conceived.

Exploration and Interaction

Read Luke 1:26-38.

In verse 29, how did Mary react to the angel and his greeting?

God knew Mary would have many questions. In verse 34, what question did Mary ask?

What had God already done to show His power?

God wanted Mary to know everything would be okay. He quieted her *what ifs* in verse 37. What did the angel say?

What was Mary's response? How did she so beautifully surrender her life and the life of her future son?

Next, Mary surrendered her unborn child's well being. As an expectant mother, I struggled with *what ifs*. My mother even cautioned me not to reach above my head to get an item from a shelf...an old wives' tale about the umbilical cord. (I told you I come by these *what ifs* honestly.) I diligently read all the "what to expect" books and avoided caffeine, cold cuts, and second-hand smoke. I prayed over my unborn child, begging God to help me raise her in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. If you are an expectant mother, ponder Mary and Joseph's surrender of their unborn child.

Exploration and Interaction

Read Matthew 1:18-25.

In verse 19, Joseph being a just man had a plan for dealing with an unexpected pregnancy. What was his plan?

Verse 20 says Joseph “thought on these things.” Maybe he asked *what if*, too. God knew beforehand that Joseph, being a human, would have doubts and fears. How did God handle this?

How did Joseph share with Mary in surrendering all, even a child unto the Lord? (Verse 24-25)

Application

Scripture paints a beautiful portrait of the new parents surrendering their newborn baby to the Lord. Read Luke 2:22-42, meditating on Mary and Joseph’s obedience and diligence in teaching their child customs and observances as part of the practice of their faith.

If your church holds baby dedication services, talk to your pastor about taking part and publicly committing to surrender your child to God.

Are you teaching your child to observe ordinances that are part of our faith and practice as Free Will Baptists?

Attend baptismal services and use them as opportunities to explain to your child the significance of baptism.

Does your family attend communion services? Make an effort to be there and use them as a springboard for discussion at home about the sacrifice Christ made for us.

Does your child see you taking part in feet washing? Observing this ordinance gives you a beautiful opportunity to teach humility and service.

Mary and Joseph knew the importance of observing ordinances and being obedient, even with a newborn. Follow their example in your own life and the lives of your children.

God Is in Control

Now, Mary faced another challenge. King Herod wanted her beautiful little boy killed. He was troubled when the wise men came searching for the child. He felt threatened and secretly had plans to kill Jesus. I cannot begin to fathom the *what ifs* that must have crossed the minds of His parents.

Exploration and Interaction

Read Matthew 2:1-23.

What plan did the angel reveal to Mary and Joseph? (Verse 13)

How did Mary and Joseph react to the angel's direction? (Verse 14)

What was the result of their willingness to surrender completely the well being of their child to God? (Verse 15)

In verse 20, what directions did the angel give to Joseph?

How did Mary and Joseph react? (Verse 21)

What did an angel tell Joseph for a third time? (Verse 22)

What did the young couple and their child do? (Verse 22-23)

What was the result of their obedience and surrender? (Verse 23)

Jesus grew! He was now a 12 year-old boy. Along with this new stage in life comes a whole new set of *what ifs*. Do you have an elementary or middle-school-aged child? Maybe some of Mary's struggles will ring true for you.

Exploration and Interaction

Read Luke 2:40-52.

What was the emotional state of Mary and Joseph as they searched for Jesus? (Verse 48)

Brainstorm a list of possible *what ifs* that may have crossed their minds.

What do we learn from verse 50?

How does this truth apply to you and/or your school-age child?

Mary kept all these sayings in her heart (verse 51). What lessons in surrender do you think Mary learned through this experience?

How did God continue to prove faithful? (Verse 52)

The Bible is full of examples of mothers (and fathers) who completely surrendered their children to the God who created them. Consider Hannah surrendering Samuel at such a young age; Jochebed giving up Moses and trusting God with his future; Abraham willing to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac; the widow of Zarephath willing to give up the last meal of her son knowing they were in God's hands.

Application

Thank God today for the biblical examples of mothers who completely surrendered their children to God. The same God they were able to trust is the One who sees you and me and our children. Look around in your church for women who have trusted God with their children's physical and spiritual well being. Hasn't He proven Himself faithful time and time again? Lay your *what ifs* at His feet today.

God Has a Plan

Like any normal parent, Mary may have exhibited some helicopter tendencies, hovering over Jesus as He played outside, maybe bandaging a scraped knee, or perhaps comforting Him as He recounted the words

of Nazareth's meanest bully. No doubt she watched with pride as He grew into a teenager and then into an adult, admiring His knowledge of the Word as He taught in the temple and eventually began to perform miracles that astounded even the most religious of the time. Surely, Mary must have watched with awe, and at times may have said, "That's MY son." He was God's, and He was hers. Surrender was surely easy as she watched His life unfold and change the lives of thousands.

Perhaps it was Mary who first noticed the glares of the Pharisees, who heard the hateful whispers of the doubters, and felt the tension in the air as Jesus' presence was welcomed by some, but not all. "That's MY son," she may have whispered as He continued to be obedient to His heavenly Father.

Mary no doubt witnessed the angry mob, as they demanded the crucifixion of her beloved child. "But that's MY son..." Her heart shattered as she watched the scenario unfold with her beloved child in the very

The One who created your child has a plan for his or her life ...

center. Surrender felt very different when Jesus was beaten, mocked, spat upon, and put to death for a world that hated Him.

Do you surrender your adult children to the Lord? Their path, whether it be a situation that is out of their control, or a way they have chosen for themselves may not be easy to endure or watch. My supposedly non-existent *what if* gene reared its ugly head as my youngest left for college. *What if* the secular college he chose nullifies all he has learned spiritually? *What if* my parenting mistakes cancel any good I tried to do in his life? *What if?* Worries consumed me. The prayer of dedication I had prayed before both my children were born seemed so faint and far away.

The One who created your child has a plan for his or her life, and He may use the dark and desperate times to mold them. Through it all, Mary was there, even at the foot of the cross. Are we there, loving our children through the darkness, surrendering them to *El Shaddai* (God Almighty) as He is shaping them for His purpose? He is faithful, even in the most worrisome and confusing of circumstances (Isaiah 55:8)

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