

Mary or Eve...



Key Scriptures: Genesis 1-3; Luke 1-2

The Old Testament begins with the account of creation. The spotlight is on the creation of man because he was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). “Male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27). In chapter 2, we read the details. Man was formed from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7) while woman was formed from man’s rib” (Genesis 2:21-25).

God placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and gave them specific instructions to “be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it” (Genesis 1:28). Can you imagine how beautiful and idyllic such a place? “The Lord God commanded the man saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it’” (Genesis 2:16-17). The highlight of this garden was that God walked and talked with them.

The New Testament spotlight lands early on a young Jewish maiden. Matthew 1:19 introduces Mary of Nazareth as the betrothed wife of Joseph, *a just man*. In biblical culture, the betrothal or engagement was as binding as one's marriage. Luke introduces Mary in chapter one following the account of the conception of John the Baptist by Zechariah, the priest, and Elisabeth, his barren wife.

Luke 1:26-27 states, "And in the sixth month [of Elisabeth's pregnancy] the angel Gabriel was sent from God ... to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph and the virgin's name was Mary." Isaiah prophesied many years earlier, "Behold a virgin shall conceive" (7:14).

Reflective Questions

Describe what it must have been like to walk and talk with God in the Garden or to be the one chosen to bear the Messiah.

Name times in your life when you wish you could enjoy such face-to-face intimacy.

Where Is My Focus?



Genesis chapter 3 is a pivotal chapter because sin enters.

Once again, woman (Eve) is in the spotlight. She is not with Adam when the serpent approaches her. Satan subtly causes Eve to be discontent, to doubt, and then to deny. He is crafty and knows when and where to strike with temptation. There are obvious steps in this downward spiral.

She saw.

She took.

She ate.

She gave to her husband.

He ate.

The blame game began.

An *inward-focus* is obvious in this spiral. What looks good to me? What will make me happy? What can I do to get what I want? Once I get what I want, I may not take responsibility but will easily cast blame on another. Eve was free to put her will and wishes above God's will. And she did!

The *sin* in Genesis 3:6 is one of *choice*. Why was Eve near the forbidden tree? Was she seeking to satisfy her curiosity? What had God said? "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof

thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Eve made the choice to shun God's spoken word. Did she think she had a better way? Her foolish choice introduced sin and death into the world.



As we read Luke 1:26-38, we learn several things about Mary. When Gabriel

appeared to her, her response indicated her willingness to obey God based on her perceptive understanding of Scripture.

In verse 31, Gabriel tells Mary that she will conceive, bear a son, and call his name Jesus. Verse 34 reveals her heart as she responds, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" She did not question the assignment only how it could happen. She knew she and Joseph had not consummated their marriage.

Gabriel's response was simply,

"with God nothing shall be impossible."

Luke 1:37

Mary well knew the biblical instructions related to infidelity (Deuteronomy 24:1). Yielding to this assignment could result in being maligned, misunderstood, or even put to death. Yet Mary's courageous faith and

submissive spirit to the Lord is evident as she responds, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word” (1:38). She may have been trembling but she chose to be bold and embrace God’s plan for her life.

Mary’s focus was outward. She, like other Jewish people, awaited the Messiah. Yet, here she is, chosen to be the mother of the Messiah. Her concern at this point is not for her own self but for the accomplishment of God’s purpose.

Reflective Questions

Can you describe a situation in which you, like Eve, made a choice which you later regretted? What did you learn from this experience that will help you face future temptations?

Do you possess an obedient, courageous faith? If not, name ways to further develop your faith so when God asks you to step out of your comfort zone, you respond, “Yes, Lord!”

If you are honest with yourself, are you inward-focused as Eve or outward-focused like Mary? Are changes needed? If so, specifically name them and then begin working to develop them.

Do I Trust God's Word?



Compare Genesis 2:16-17 with 3:3. Did God tell Adam and Eve they could not touch the fruit? Eve *added to God's word*. She listened to the serpent thinking better things would be available beyond God's will. She chose to be disobedient and shun God's word.

Eve chose to *eat* the forbidden fruit. This simple choice was an abandonment of God and His plan for her. This action hindered her abilities to be a helpmeet to Adam, to nurture the next generation well, and to be a Kingdom builder. Eve was expecting new freedoms...to be happier...even though she was not being obedient to God's command. What did she find—pain, sorrow, regret, and grief.



By trusting God's word delivered to her by Gabriel, Mary drew closer to God. She accepted the fact that shame and false accusations would come her way. She embraced and cherished the unplanned pregnancy and married Joseph. She totally assumed the expectations that would change her world.

Mary's courageous obedience came because she held firm to God's goodness before any good results happened. How does she describe this time in her life? Read Luke 1:46-49. Where does Mary stand? "...He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name." All she could see was scandal, Joseph's uncertainty, and false accusations. Yet, she trusted God that her life with Him would be blessed.

Reflective Questions

"The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). How does Mary exemplify this?

How can you be such an example?

Stuck or Striving?



Genesis 3:11-13 records the first historical record of passing-the-buck or playing the blame game. God asked, "Did you eat from the forbidden tree?" Adam responded, "Yes, but the woman You gave me gave me the fruit." Eve further shifted the blame, "That serpent tricked me so it isn't really my fault." Eve first chose to disobey God's spoken word, and then she failed to accept responsibility for her actions.

Like Eve, we each have a choice. Joan C. Webb writes, "We will gain self-respect when we decide to stop blaming others for our dilemmas and start taking responsibility for our own choices."

Reflective Questions

Blame or accept responsibility, the choice is ours. Contrast situations where you chose to blame others with ones where you accepted responsibility. What lessons did you learn?

Are you willing to place your children in the hands of God to use however He deems best? Or are the apron strings tied tight?



Anxieties clouded Mary's faith as well. Remember in Luke 2:41-50 when Jesus is 12. He stayed behind in the Temple while the rest of the family traveled home. When Mary and Joseph find him, she asked, "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

You can hear the pain and anguish gushing from her mother's heart. Fast forward to Calvary. She was horrified as she helplessly watched the events unfold. Note Jesus' tender love for her as he places her in John's care (John 19:25-27).

My Way or His?



Eve conceived and bore two sons. Her joy at their birth quickly changes by the heartache produced by Cain's actions (Genesis 4). Cain chose his own way, as had his mother, then murdered his brother in defiance of God's commands regarding sacrifices. God banished Cain so Eve is childless. Later in His mercy and grace, God blessed Eve with a third son, Seth, who became the ancestor of the Messiah.

"Although created in God's image, Eve exercised her will to disobey the Creator, daring to challenge His authority. Her temptation was not merely to disobey but ultimately to have her own way or get possession of what she wanted" (*KJV Study Bible for Women*, Thomas Nelson Publishers).

Adam originally called his wife, Woman (Genesis 2:23)

because she was taken from man. This name reinforces his leadership and authority over her. However, he changes her name to Eve "because she was the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). This demonstrated an act of faith by Adam. He was looking to the future with hope.



"An unknown maiden from the despised Galilean town of Nazareth (John 1:46)

illuminates for all time the basic nature of womanhood: entrusting to the next generation the message of God's faithfulness, whether through the rearing of one's own child or through the task of spiritual nurturing that might extend beyond the family circle. Not only was Mary God's sovereign choice to bear the Christ Child; she was also a devoted and humble follower of her Messiah" (*KJV Study Bible for Women*, Thomas Nelson Publishers).

Reflective Questions

What thoughts might Eve have had as she gave birth to her sons? Could that have been a time for soul-searching in her life? What about the season after Abel's murder?

Journal lessons learned from your most recent soul-searching event.

Can it be said of you as Mary, “She was a devoted and humble follower of her Messiah?” What legacy will you leave?

Do we choose names of significance when naming our own children?

What does your name mean? Do you know why you were given this name?

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