

BIBLICAL EXERCISES FOR SPIRITUAL HEALTH & FITNESS IN 2014 SERIES

**Truth-3: Spirit-Filled
How God's Spirit Immortalized Mary's
Very Common Life By Very Un-Common Living
Luke 1:26-2:19**

We are studying what it means to walk through life in step with the Spirit of God. There is nothing complicated about life as a believer, it is just staying under the direction & control of the Spirit. When we do so we can live the most amazing life possible, the life God desires us to live. This morning as we look at Mary there is one truth we need to notice:

GOD'S SPIRIT PROMPTS UN-COMMON LIVING

The Holy Spirit can make any common life to become un-common.

The Holy Spirit can make any ordinary life to be extra-ordinary.

The Holy Spirit can make any life headed nowhere to a life headed somewhere eternal.

Each person in God's Word that surrendered to God's Spirit, lived a life no one else ever lived, or could live.

Today we look at a young lady with a very common name, in fact, maybe the most common name of the day where she lived. Yet this commonly named girl becomes perhaps the most famous woman in history.

LIVING A COMMON LIFE

Mary had a very common name. In Old Testament Hebrew it is Miriam as in the sister of Moses. Some Bible scholars say that one in five were named Mary in Israel Century One¹. That's common.

Even to this day the name Mary is common. How many Mary's have there been over the years? Social Security records over the past 100 years cite Mary as the most frequently used name (3.61 million). We have 31 different ladies named Mary just here at CBC alone.

In the New Testament we have at least six Mary's:

1. Mary Magdalene, the woman from who seven devils were expelled (Lk 8:2).
2. Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus, sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to his teachings (Lk 10: 38-42).

¹ The name Mary has a variety of spellings depending on the language used in different versions or translations of the Bible. Myriam is in the Hebrew Old Testament. Maryam is in the Aramaic language. Mariam is in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Maria is in the Greek New Testament. Maria is in the Latin translations of the Bible. Besides Mary, the Mother of Jesus, there are a minimum of seven other persons in the Bible holding this name: Miriam, or Myriam, the sister of Moses (Ex 15, 20-21). Mary Magdalene (Lk 8:2). Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus (Lk 10: 38-42). Mary, mother of James and John (Mk 15: 40-47). Mary, the wife of Clopas, whom some identify with Mary, the mother of James and John (Jn 19:25). Mary, mother of John Mark (Acts 12: 12). Mary, a Christian of Rome (Rm 16:6).

3. Mary, mother of James and John, and witness of the crucifixion and the empty tomb (Mk 15: 40-47).
4. Mary, the wife of Clopas, whom some identify with Mary, the mother of James and John (Jn 19:25).
5. Mary, mother of John Mark, giving refuge to Peter after his escape from prison in Jerusalem (Acts 12: 12).
6. Mary, a Christian of Rome, who is greeted and praised by the apostle Paul (Rm 16:6).

So what is it that made Mary's life stand out above all the other Mary's of her day and since? Only one thing sets her apart:

MARY IS AN EXAMPLE OF UN-COMMON LIVING IN THE SPIRIT

Remember, the Holy Spirit can make any common life to become un-common.

The Holy Spirit can make any ordinary life to be extra-ordinary.

The Holy Spirit can make any life headed nowhere to a life headed somewhere & like no one else.

Most scholars would agree that The Mary, the mother of Jesus, was probably much like most of all other girls of her day. Of all the writers of Scripture it is Luke who highlights Mary with 12 of the 20 verses that name her are in Luke and one is in Acts. So 65% of all that we have comes to us through Luke. From the Scripture accounts we can conclude quite safely that:

She was **young**: probably 14 or 15 when she was betrothed to Joseph.

She was **simple**: which means she grew up in a sheltered, close, family-oriented atmosphere.

She was **plain**: there is never any indication that she looked striking in any way.

Let's briefly meet this incredible woman. Starting in Luke 1:26 we can find seven uncommon choices that Mary made that are each tied to God's Spirit.

1. IT IS UN-COMMON THAT MARY LISTENED TO GOD'S WORD

Luke 1:26-28 (NKJV) Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And having come in, **the angel said to her**, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

In v. 28 we see God sending a message to Mary and Mary listening. Sounds simple enough. Yet it is profound. Every day we all have something in common with Mary, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, David, and Paul: *we can chose to listen, and hear God speak.*

Each of the great cast of God's servants had one thing in common: they each heard and responded to God.

Some heard God directly hearing His audible voice (like Adam, Enoch, and Moses). Others heard God's voice relayed through the audible voice of a prophet (like Nathan confronting David); and others just like you and me today: listened to God speak through His Word, the Holy Scriptures called the Bible (like Daniel studying the prophet Jeremiah).

UN-COMMON LIVING IN THE SPIRIT MEANS REALLY LISTENING TO GOD

The common element of every servant of God's life is that all listened to God speak, and then responded in obedience. The real question of Christmas is are you giving God the gift of listening to His voice, and responding to Him? Jesus told us that hearing and doing His will was the clearest way we can show Him our love:

John 14:21 (NKJV) **He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.** And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Do we love the Lord enough this Christmas to give Him the time it takes to listen to Him speak? Do we love the Lord enough this Christmas to stop and listen until we hear what He wants? Do we love the Lord enough this Christmas to stop, listen, hear, and DO what he wants us to do? That is the real challenge of giving our attention to God this Christmas.

REALLY LISTENING TO GOD MEANS LOVING GOD

We all need to examine whether we are giving to God what those who truly love Him give.

Either we hear God's Word as just the word of men or as it truly is, the Word of God that effectually works in us who receive it by faith.

Mary joined so many others that the Scriptures describe as responding to God: Adam and Eve in the Garden, Noah in the Pre-Flood world, Abram in Ur, Saul on the road to Damascus. Always remember that God is in the people seeking business. Salvation is of the Lord and it is God who seeks us, He initiates salvation for, Salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9).

Want to live an un-common life in the Spirit? Listen to the Voice of God in His Word.

2. IT IS UN-COMMON THAT MARY CHOSE TO BOW TO GOD'S GRACE.

Luke 1:29-30 (NKJV) But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for **you have found favor with God.**

Mary partook of God's grace, and was saved by God. Luke 1:30 literally says you have been 'discovered by the grace of God'. Her hearing and believing God's Word led her to the open arms of: "God my Savior" as Mary says, down a few verses in v. 47, see it there?

Mary needed a Savior, and God the Savior found her with His grace v.30, and she confessed from then on that God had saved her, and He was her Savior.

Mary joined the countless multitudes that will surround the Throne of God in Heaven singing that they are heirs of life eternal by God's grace. As the hymn writer has said, and so many of us have written in our hearts: "Marvelous grace of our loving Lord grace that exceeds our sin and our shame, yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured there where the blood of the Lamb was shed".

Sing with me..."Grace, grace, God's grace..."

Want to live an un-common life in the Spirit? Bow to God's Grace.

3. IT IS UN-COMMON THAT MARY SURRENDERED TO DO GOD'S WILL FOR HER LIFE

Luke 1:31-33 (NKJV) And behold, **you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.** 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

To produce within her body tiny hands that would someday touch lepers with a healing touch, to form a mouth within her womb that would speak the very Word of God, to feel the kick of feet that would walk the roads of Israel and spread the Gospel. What an incredible ministry opportunity.

But wait, not to lessen her calling, but isn't that the opportunity all moms have?

To teach those tiny little ones that the greatest joy in all the world is to be touched by Jesus and be healed from the dreaded leprosy of sin? And to use their mouth share the power of the gospel with any who will listen. Can't we all do that and share in Mary's great opportunity?

And as a mother we can start their feet toward serving the Lord in many ways? Yes, what an opportunity we share. That is why Paul said in I Timothy 2 that women equal (are saved from second rate ministry) the men in church teaching and leading ministry - mothers bear and raise the teachers and leaders!

Want to live an un-common life in the Spirit? Surrender to God's Will.

4. IT IS UN-COMMON THAT MARY BECAME THE DWELLING PLACE OF GOD

Luke 1:34-37 (NKJV) Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” 35 And the angel answered and said to 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. 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible.”

Notice Mary's response. Even after being sought out and given such an amazing message, humble Mary has airs, no pride, just a humbly troubled heart, that anyone would even say such a thing. Mary knew her own heart, she was nothing and was not worthy to be so greatly blessed by God.

When the power of the Highest overshadowed her, Mary was surrounded by the Shekinah Glory, as God the Son entered her womb.

Mary experienced God within. She let her body become God's Temple.

Wow, was Mary then the very first New Testament believer indwelt by Christ? That is what all of us believers now have the joy of being: the dwelling place of Christ. Though Christ was

physically within her, He was also spiritually within her just as He “dwells in our hearts by faith” as Paul tells us (Ephesians 3:17).

God doing the impossible is what our life for Him is all about. That is what Mary experienced, and that is what we also can experience as we give ourselves to Him.

Want to live an un-common life in the Spirit? Live as God's Dwelling Place.

5. IT IS UN-COMMON THAT MARY SERVED GOD'S PLANS

Luke 1:38-45 (NKJV) Then Mary said, “Behold **the maidservant of the Lord!** Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. 39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.”

Mary declared that she was a Slave of God. When you read Luke 1:38 you see the self-description Mary gives: "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her. (NIV)

Wow, what a submissive and godly attitude. I'll say yes Lord yes, to your will and to your way! All I am all I have all I'll ever be, I give it all to You. And off she goes to be a blessing, starting with her cousin Elizabeth, who hadn't told her the big news yet!

Want to live an un-common life in the Spirit? Serve God's Plans.

6. IT IS UN-COMMON THAT MARY FED HER SOUL GOD'S WORD

Luke 1:46-55 (NKJV) And Mary said: “**My soul magnifies the Lord,** 47 and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. 50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. 54 He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, 55 As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.”

In these ten verses that flow from Mary's heart, we see a Mary who was immersed in the Scriptures and who was focused upon God. She points to the Lord 19x, mentions herself 4x, and quotes over twenty different Scripture portions! Mary **gave her attention** to God by:

SEEKING GOD IS TIME CONSUMING

Mary sought God in His Word, and so should we. Have you paused to ask yourself how she did it? For starters, think how hard it would have been to have Bible study in Mary's day. In the world where Mary lived:

Every drop of water used in cooking and drinking was carried home by women, from springs or wells, in clay pots.
Every ounce of flour was ground by hand with a stone mill.
Every loaf of bread hand-made, and then was baked in an oven heated with a wood fire that had to be kept burning.
Every one of the dishes that were used were washed with even more water carried from a spring or well.

So time was at a premium, what's new right?

But also, 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. So her knowledge of the Scriptures must have come from her dad who Luke tells us was named Heli² Maybe Heli encouraged his daughter by exposing her deeply to the Scriptures. What a wonderful pursuit for any dad. Whatever the means Mary immersed herself in God's Word!

Want to live an un-common life in the Spirit? Feed Your Soul God's Word.

7. IT IS UN-COMMON THAT MARY STAYED SENSITIVE TO GOD.

Luke 2:19 (NIV) But Mary **treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.** (NIV).

Where did Luke get all this material he recorded in his two-volume work on the first century event that changed everything? Yes, some of it came right out of the air from heaven. The Holy Spirit just told him what to say (inspiration). But the rest came from hard work, 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 (lit. 'to put together') all that God had done.

Want to live an un-common life in the Spirit? Stay Sensitive to God.

WANT TO LIVE AN UN-COMMON LIFE

Always remember the lessons that God can teach us from this humble servant's life:

Mary Listened to God's Word. (Luke 1:26-28)
Mary Chose to Bow to God's Grace. (Luke 1:29-30)
Mary surrendered to God's will for Her Life (Luke 1:31-33)
Mary Became the Dwelling Place of God (Luke 1:34-37)
Mary Served God's Plans (Luke 1:38-45)
Mary Fed Her Souls God's Word (Luke 1:46-55)
Mary Stayed Sensitive to God. (Luke 2:19)

And so can we by God's grace!

² (Luke 3:23 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.)

APPENDIX: MARY'S FAMILY DETAILS

There is an old Christian tradition³, dating at least to Byzantine times that Mary was born in Zippori. Israeli guide, Yossi Ashkenazi, stated that evidence from Talmudic sources confirms this, and that Mary's father was the headmaster of Zippori's Jewish school (Yeshiva). The Gospel accounts indicate that the Lord Jesus was often called "Rabbi" by His disciples and other people. The term Rabbi was not used loosely in Israel; it was only attributed to someone who had received the rigorous training in the Law of Moses provided by a Yeshiva.

The small town of Nazareth was large enough to have its own synagogue, but it was certainly not large enough to have a rabbinic Yeshia. So it is reasonable to speculate that Jesus studied at the Yeshiva in Zippori where His own maternal grandfather was the headmaster. This conclusion helps us to fill in some of the gaps in the silent years of our Lord's life.

There are very few New Testament verses about Mary. It is likely that she was a native of Nazareth and that she came from a relatively poor family.

Her actual name was Miryam. In English this Hebrew name is usually rendered by the spelling "Miriam" in the *Old Testament* and "Mary" in the New Testament.

From Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, and John 19:25 we learn she had a sister named Salome, the mother of James and John (who therefore were Jesus' cousins).

From Luke 3 we receive her Davidic lineage. If, as many believe, the Eli (or Heli) of Luke 3:23 was Joseph's father-in-law (Matthew gives Joseph's father as Jacob, 1:16), then Eli was Mary's father. We know that Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, was Mary's "relative" (Luke 1:36), probably her cousin. Those are the only relatives, besides her husband and children, of whom the New Testament speaks.

OTHER MESSAGES ON MARY:

131201AM Giving to God Like Mary: A Life of Consecration Luke 1:26-55

101219AM Mary: A Beautiful Woman Luke 1:26-55

051225AM Joseph & Mary: The King's servants "*Does God have all of you?*"

031207AM Joseph & Mary GCM-13

³ Tom McCall with Zola Levitt, *The Stones Cry Out*. Dallas, Texas: ZOLA, no date, pgs 59-63.