

Mary: Mother of God

She saw His birth as her son and she saw Him die as her Savior.

Angels don't usually make appointments before showing up. She must have felt like she was being congratulated for winning the grand prize in a contest she had never entered. It had to be puzzling, awesome and frightening all at once. Then she heard what any woman in Israel would have longed to hear. She was going to be the mother of the Messiah.

"The angel replied, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and He will be called the Son of God". Luke 1:35 NLT

The words of Simeon must have come to her mind many times in the years that followed. He said, *"a sword will pierce your very soul."* Luke 2:35

A big part of her painful privilege of motherhood would be to see her son rejected and crucified by the people he came to save

I believe that even if she had known everything it meant that she would have still said yes to being used by God.

We have made a big deal out of giving at Christmas although Christ was and is the ultimate gift. You and I have the unique opportunity to give our lives back to the One that redeemed us by coming to this earth.

We give our lives back by making ourselves available through faith and obedience to carry out God's mission on earth. Are you available? Will you allow your life to be a gift to God this coming year?

The reality of our lives is simply this; life is full of many emotions and experiences. All of us are touched at one time or the other with the ups and downs of life. We may laugh one day and cry the next, but the redemption of all of these experiences is to allow Jesus Christ to walk with us daily and to experience them through His perspective and leadership.

When we submit our lives, our loves, and the leadership of our life to Him He finds a way to use it all for His glory and honor. People around us are changed. We are changed. Our destiny is changed.

John Maxwell states, "It's amazing what can happen to and through an ordinary man when God pours a little hardship and the power of the Holy Spirit into the mix... One ordinary man, a little persecution, and a touch from the Spirit of God led to massive conversions in the city of Samaria. As Jesus had predicted, the gospel message made its way from Jerusalem into the outlying world (Acts 1:8). Philip illustrates what one leader,

with the empowerment of the Spirit of God and with authority of Jesus Christ, can do to change the world” (Maxwell Leadership Bible page 1331). That’s a little side study you can conduct on your own but God uses ordinary men and women every day.

Some of you will say or think that you have nothing to give. Let’s consider the following statements.

1. God’s best servants are often ordinary people who make themselves available to Him

*Then they scoffed, “He’s just a carpenter, the son of **Mary** and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. And his sisters live right here among us.” They were deeply offended and refused to believe in him. Mark 6:2-4*

Every one of us in this room are just ordinary people until we make ourselves available to God.

Henry Blackaby once wrote,

“When God was ready to judge the world with a flood, He came to Noah. When He desired to build a nation for Himself, He turned to Abraham. When He heard His children groaning under Egyptian bondage, He appeared in a burning bush to Moses. They were three of the most ordinary of men. But God had work to do, and He knew just who to do it with. God has always given His people assignments that are too big for them to handle alone, so that a watching world can see—not what we can do—but what God can do.”

This truth is so simple that we often overlook it. Mary was not special in any of the ways we now make her special. Birthing the Son of God has a way of making you an overnight celebrity but really she was just a young lady willing to be used by God.

Celebrity, wealth and notoriety are not the goal. The goal is to take our ordinary everyday life and give it to God daily and then get ready to watch Him work.

Believe it or not God uses ordinary people to do His extraordinary work.

¹³ *The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.* ¹⁴ *But since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them, there was nothing the council could say. Acts 4:13-14 NLT*

And in The Message Bible we read this in 1 Corinthians 1:

Take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don’t see many of “the brightest and the best” among you, not many influential, not many from high-society families. Isn’t it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these “nobodies” to expose the

hollow pretensions of the “somebodies”? That makes it quite clear that none of you can get by with blowing your own horn before God. Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ. That’s why we have the saying, “If you’re going to blow a horn, blow a trumpet for God.”

2. God’s plans involve extraordinary events in ordinary people's lives

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. ²⁸ Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!”

²⁹ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ³⁰ “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God Luke 1:26-30 NLT

"Utterly ordinary, so commonplace: while we profess to know a power the 20th century cannot reckon with. We are all sideliners, coaching and criticizing the real wrestlers while content to set by and leave the enemies of God unchallenged. We are spiritual pacifists, conscientious objectors in the battle-to-the-death, with principalities and powers in the heavenly places. The world cannot hate us, we are too much like its own. Oh that God would make us dangerous.” Jim Elliot wrote those words as he was allowing God to lead him to his life calling. His calling didn’t last very long because he wound up dead on river bed killed by the very people he was taking the message of Christ to. But his death and the death of those with him led to their wives going to the very people that killed their husbands and sharing the good news of Christ.

3. A person’s character is revealed by his or her response to the unexpected

³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³² He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³ And he will reign over Israel^[e] forever; his Kingdom will never end!”

³⁴ Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.”

³⁵ The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. . . . ³⁸ Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” And then the angel left her. Luke 1:31-35, 38 NLT

Our response is so important when the unexpected comes our way. There are times when the unexpected brings us joy.

In Mary's case it was a mixture of both. The fact that she was pregnant and not married even though it wasn't her doing had to be hard to explain. The joy of raising a healthy little boy had to make her heart happy. The three years of ministry done by her Son was enough to make her forget the rough beginning of His life. The crowds, the miracles, the followers, the excitement and buzz wherever Jesus went would be enough. And just when it all looked so promising, He was captured, tortured, and executed like a common criminal between two thieves.

Remember she had made herself available as a servant and an ordinary person to the will of God. That decision was the right one but it was a road filled with ups and downs. It was a life of both joy and sorrow. The joy of birth and the sorrow of death.

It's life folks. It's normal life for all of us but the key is to surrender our lives to God and allow Him to use the joy and the sorrow to lead others to Himself.

Lisa Beamer's husband is thought to have led the charge of the cockpit of a plane flown by terrorists that was headed to Washington D.C. The plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania but not before flying over Ohio. All on board were lost and the families were left to pick up their lives alone and move forward.

In *Let's Roll: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Courage*, Lisa Beamer reflects on the loss of her dad. She says,

"Slowly, I began to understand that the plans God has for us don't just include "good things", but the whole array of human events. The "prospering" he talks about in the book of Jeremiah is often the outcome of a bad event. I remember my mom saying that many people look for miracles- things that in their human minds "fix" the situation. Many miracles, however, are not a change to the normal course of human events; they're found in God's ability and desire to sustain and nurture people through even the worst situations. Somewhere along the way, I stopped demanding that God fix the problems in my life and started to be thankful for his presence as I endured them."

God is not looking for extraordinary people. God is looking for ordinary people who will trust God in an extraordinary way.

Morton Kondracke is known as a no-nonsense, independent-thinking journalist who, in addition to writing, appears on shows like *The McLaughlin Group* and Fox's *The Beltway Boys*. His wife's life has been touched by Parkinson's, a disease that affects over a million Americans.

In an interview with Dick Staub, Kondracke describes how they first discovered the disease: She had beautiful handwriting, and she was writing a check and couldn't form the letter k right. I didn't appreciate that there was any difference. It looked fine to me. But she insisted that, no, there was something wrong. Later she had a tremor in the little finger of her right hand, and then her foot would sort of wobble on the brakes when she was driving.

She had been a counselor at the neurology center in Bethesda, Maryland, helping families with patients with chronic neurological diseases. She was given Symmetrel, which is a Parkinson's medicine by a doctor, and he didn't tell her what it was. But she called me up at work one day, totally distraught and hysterical in a way that I'd never heard Milly before. She said, "You have to come home right away."

There she was standing in the bedroom with this bottle in her hand. She said, "This is a Parkinson's medicine. It can't be Parkinson's. I've seen Parkinson's. It's a horrible disease. I won't be able to talk. I won't be able to walk. I won't be able to swallow. I won't be able to eat. You'll have to take me to the bathroom. I'll be totally dependent. You won't love me anymore. You'll leave me."

[I had to] convince her that I was not going to bug out. Apparently 50 percent of men whose wives have chronic illnesses split. Women tend to stick and men don't half the time. She couldn't be sure that I wasn't one of the wrong 50 percent in the beginning, but after a certain point she realized that I was there for the duration.

You just ask God's help every day, multiple times a day. I couldn't do this without God's help. I pray for help and strength and Milly's deliverance, all the time. I simply could not do this without feeling that I was doing God's work in a small way. I've asked God innumerable times, you know, So what is my purpose here on Earth? hoping that he will add a new and grandiose dimension to this, which he never does. The message always comes back the same: Your job here is to take care of Milly. ("The Dick Staub Interview: Morton Kondracke" ChristianityToday.com, 8-13-02)

Most of the time God calls upon ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

One of my personal favorite scriptures is Romans 12:1-2, and I want us to recited it together from The Message bible.

This is my prayer for you and I as individuals and it is my prayer for us as a church. My hope my prayer is that in this coming year we are known as a church for nothing more than being a surrendered people. Surrendered to God's will and living it out daily.

¹⁻² So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you. Romans 12:1-2 The Message

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, We lay our lives before you. You know the past. You know the ups and downs. You know the things that we would like to remember and the things we would just as soon forget. You know our pain and you know our joy. And Lord you know our present. You know the sorrow and the fear. You know the sickness and challenges of our lives today. You know the joy of family gathered and holidays. And Lord you know about tomorrow. You know where our path will take us.

Today Lord, we surrender to you our past, our present and our futures. We pray that you will lead us and that we will have the courage to follow all the days of our lives. And now Lord as we go from this place I ask that you would be in all of our conversations and in our lives over this week that we are in. Thank you Jesus for coming and for giving us life. Amen