

# Chosen by God

**Study 3**  
**Chosen to Persevere**

**Study 4**  
**Chosen to Suffer**



*AHB*

*AHB*

30 Through all the changing scenes      48 Be still my Soul

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**MU SYDNEY**  
presents  
**Study Program 2000**

**A SERIES OF 4 BIBLE STUDIES**  
**Based on the life of Jesus' mother, Mary**

**Written by Wendy Mayer**

# INTRODUCTION

It's good to be chosen, it makes us feel valuable, appreciated, wanted.. However being chosen carries a responsibility with it. We are chosen for a purpose and there is an expectation that we will try to achieve that purpose, whether it's being part of a sports or business team or whether it's being a wife or husband in a marriage.

Mary was a young woman who was chosen by God to be the mother of His Son, Jesus, the one who would save His people from their sins. Through her son God would reconcile the world to Himself. What a purpose and destiny for Mary!

But God didn't choose her randomly, His plan of salvation was in place back in the Garden of Eden when He cursed the serpent saying *'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel..'* Genesis 3:15

God doesn't choose us randomly either. As *Psalm 139:16* says *'All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.'* Don't think that God hasn't chosen you because He didn't use an angel to speak to you as He did to Mary. Peter is speaking to all Christians when he says *'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9*

We are chosen by God just as Mary was, and we are chosen with a purpose : to praise the God who called us, redeemed and saved us. As we look at Mary's life, let us see what we can learn from this young woman whose response to God's call was *'I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said'* Luke 1:38

The four studies consider how Mary, and those around her, were :

- 1) Chosen to Trust
- 2) Chosen to Praise
- 3) Chosen to Persevere
- 4) Chosen to Suffer

They consider how we are also chosen by God for these purposes.

## SUGGESTED HYMNS AND SONGS

Theme: Chosen People Ring of Praise 163  
Stand up and Bless the Lord AHB 383

Study 1  
Chosen to Trust

Study 2  
Chosen to Praise

*Australian Hymn Book (AHB)*

*AHB*

response to God. We allow our experiences and disappointments to wear us down to the point that we no longer think that God will listen to or care about our hearts' desires. God is very interested in our hearts' attitudes.

1 Samuel 16 v 7 reminds us that 'The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'

God looked at Zechariah's heart and saw doubt. He looked at Joseph and Mary's hearts and saw faith and trust, and so He entrusted to them the most precious task He could give to anyone: the care and nurture of His one and only Son, Jesus. What does God see when He looks at your heart and mine? Does He see that we no longer expect Him to act, or think that praying to Him will make no difference. When He does act are we surprised and distrustful like Zechariah, or do we confidently obey His commands like Mary and Joseph?

Like Mary, Joseph and Zechariah, we are chosen to be God's people and to trust Him. Are we prepared to trust Him with our precious relationships, our plans for the future and our very lives?

Will you ask God to give you the faith and trust to echo Mary's words, regardless of the situation you are facing, and heedless of the apparent consequences? 'I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said.'

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# Chosen by God



## STUDY 1

# Chosen to Trust

When God sent His one and only Son to earth, He chose two apparently ordinary people to care for Him. Joseph, a carpenter, and Mary, a young woman who may have been as young as 14 according to the customs of the time. But these ordinary people showed an extraordinary trust in God. They placed their future in His care and got on with the everyday tasks of raising the child He had entrusted to them.

There are times when we wonder why we have to go through the joys, problems and pains that are part of our daily lives. Why me, God? What have I done to deserve such blessing, or such agony?

God doesn't choose us because we are specially deserving, or specially brave and strong. He chooses us because He loves us, and He entrusts us with carrying out part of His plan for the world.

Do we trust God enough to obey Him in the ordinary-ness of daily life? Will we accept the difficulties and pains as being permitted by Him, or are we only interested in God's will when it is comfortable and to our liking?

## Zechariah and Mary

Luke 1: 5 - 20

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named **Zechariah**, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. 7 But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren; and they were both well along in years.

8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.

13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. 16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

19 The angel answered, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. 20 And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."

Luke 1 : 26-38

26 In the sixth month, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was **Mary**.

28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.

30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

## SUMMARY

**Zechariah was a priest, trained in the word of God. He was mature, with plenty of life experience because he was 'well advanced in years'. The Bible describes him as upright, and says that he observed all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. And yet this good, wise, mature man doubted where an inexperienced young girl trusted God.**

**Zechariah would have been very familiar with the story of Abraham and Sarah, where God enabled them to have a son when it was physically impossible for Sarah, but Zechariah didn't think it could happen to him. Over the years his hopes and dreams of a son had come to nothing. Repeated disappointments had worn down his expectations so that when the angel told him his hope would be realised at last, he couldn't believe it.**

**Although Mary initially reacted in a similar way to Zechariah, we see her absolute trust in God quickly taking over from her puzzlement. Mary may have been young, but she was not a fool. She knew that the angel's message to her was physically impossible. She couldn't have a child as she was still a virgin. But God's ways aren't man's ways, and Mary was able to accept the angel's reassurance that nothing is impossible with God.**

**What impossible situation are you facing today? A husband or child who is totally disinterested in Jesus? A sickness for which the doctors have no remedy? A future move which will cut you off from everyone and everything familiar? Are you prepared to trust God to achieve His will for you, whatever that may be and, like Mary, leave the consequences to God?**

**Mary's consequences could have cost her her life. The logical conclusion for Joseph and the rest of her community to make was that Mary had been unfaithful to her betrothal. The penalty for that was clearly laid down in Deuteronomy 22 v 21 'she shall be brought to the door of her father's house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death.' Mary totally accepted God's will for her although the legal outcome appeared to be death by stoning. She placed her confidence in God and left Him to deal with the consequences.**

**Sometimes we are more like Zechariah than Mary in our**

*God is very concerned about our heart attitudes. Our words and even our actions may say one thing, but as 1 Samuel 16 v 7 says, God looks at our hearts. What does God see when He looks at your heart?*

*Like Zechariah, we can get worn down by the disappointments of life, and we stop expecting God to take any action to change our long-standing situations. Our hearts harbour doubt, and when God does act we distrust what we see happening and fail to support those who are carrying out God's plans.*

*Mary and Joseph both trusted God totally and put their trust into action. Because they trusted Him, God trusted them with the task of raising His Son, Jesus, the Saviour of the World.*

*You have been chosen by God to be His person, His treasured possession. Is your response to God's call to you "I am the Lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said?"*

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. 37 For nothing is impossible with God."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it be to me as you have said." Then the angel left her.

*Compare the angel Gabriel's two messages.*

1) a) What parts of the messages to Mary and to Zechariah are similar?

b) What differences do you find in the messages?

*Consider Mary and Zechariah's reactions to the angel's messages*

2) What emotion did they both experience initially? (Give verses to back up your answer)

3) Looking at their first replies to the angel, how did they each view the news being given to them?

4) After their first responses, Mary and Zechariah are treated differently.

a) In what way?

b) Why do you think God treated them differently?

7 The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

5) How is 1 Samuel 16 : 7 relevant to what happened to Mary and to Zechariah?

*We probably wouldn't actually say that a situation is too hard for God, however there are times when we don't expect that God will act.*

6) a) In what type of situation do we consider that God is unlikely to intervene?

b) Is there anywhere that you have given up expecting God to act because it's been too long, and attitudes seem to be too firmly entrenched?

c) Do you accept the angel's words that 'NOTHING is impossible with God'? If so, why do you think God allows sin to continue, and apparently flourish, in the world?

*As a Jewish girl from the line of David, Mary knew her Scriptures. We will see more of that in our next study. She would also have known the Jewish laws and the penalty for sexual impurity.*

Deuteronomy 22 : 22, 21

20 If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the girl's virginity can be found, 21 she shall be brought to the door of her father's house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death. She has done a disgraceful thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father's house. You must purge the evil from among you.

7) From Deuteronomy 22: 20-21, what was the penalty if a Jewish girl could not prove she was a virgin at the time of her marriage?

8) Mary didn't just trust God with her future plans, she trusted Him

**with her very life. What could have happened when Joseph found that she was pregnant before their marriage?**

9) Can you think of a time that God has taken an apparently difficult or dangerous situation and used it to bring good?

Joseph and Zechariah

Matthew 1 : 18 - 25

18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

19 Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" - which means, "God with us."

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

10) Where did the angel appear to Joseph, and where did the angel appear to Zechariah? Do you have any comments on which would be more of a surprise?

11) What were the two messages, and which do you think would be the harder to accept?

12) What did Joseph do as a result of the message, and what does this indicate about his attitude to God?

them to choose to believe. As Paul says in Romans 10 : 13,14

*"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

*How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?*

Is there someone in your family or amongst your friends and neighbours that God is calling you to talk to about Him? Remember that unless they are told about Jesus, they have no chance of believing in Him. Don't put it off to another time, because we never know if we will have another opportunity, do it now!

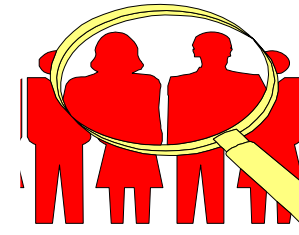
Simeon was a man who listened to God's Spirit. God had promised him that he would see the Christ before he died and Simeon believed God's word. When he saw Jesus and knew that this was the one God had promised to send, he didn't keep that knowledge to himself. He shared it with Mary and Joseph and those around them in the temple. He didn't keep quiet because they were young and wouldn't want to hear what an old man thought. Simeon encouraged the young parents and shared his God-given wisdom and perception, not only with the people of his day, but with everyone who reads his words recorded in the gospel of Luke.

Who do you know who needs encouragement? Are you holding back because you think that they wouldn't be interested in your ideas, they might think that you are out-of-date? Think of Simeon and remember that God has no retirement plan for His people. We are on active service until we go to be with Him.

It is unlikely that when we praise God, people will be reading our words 2000 years later, but our God is the same God who was praised by Hannah, by the psalmist, by Simeon and by Mary. Our praises matter to Him just as theirs did, and we matter to Him just as they did because He is the creator of all. Let us join with all God's people in praising Him sincerely, thoughtfully and often.

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# Chosen by God



## STUDY 2

# Chosen to Praise

Have you ever been so grateful to someone that you were lost for words? 'Thank you, I deeply appreciate it' seems pitifully inadequate, and yet you need to express your gratitude in some way.

Today we may buy a greeting card with a message that puts into words the feelings we want to express, or perhaps we might use the words of a poem or song.

Mary wanted to express her gratitude to God for the almost unimaginable task He had entrusted to her. The task of bearing and raising His only son, Jesus, the one who would save the world from the penalty of sin.

When she wanted to praise and thank God for His great goodness to her, she turned to a source that came naturally to her mind, the Scriptures. In the hymn of praise expressed by another mother-to-be, Mary found the thoughts and ideas that helped her put her own feelings into words.

When was the last time you used the Bible to put your thoughts into words? Is it one of the first places you turn to express your ideas, or is it only used to find a verse to put on cards at weddings and funerals?

Hannah

**sang her song of praise to God when she dedicated her son, Samuel, to God. She thanked God for answering her prayer and giving her a son after a long period of childlessness. Samuel became a prophet of God and one of Israel's judges.**

Hannah's Song

1 Samuel 2: 1 - 10

2:1 Then Hannah prayed and said: "My heart rejoices in the LORD; in the LORD my horn is lifted high. My mouth boasts over my enemies, for I delight in your deliverance.

2 There is no one holy like the LORD; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

3 Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.

4 The bows of the warriors are broken, but those who stumbled are armed with strength. 5 Those who were full hire themselves out for food, but those who were hungry hunger no more. She who was barren has borne seven children, but she who has had many sons pines away. 6 "The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. 7 The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. 8 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor. For the foundations of the earth are the Lord's; upon them he has set the world. 9 He will guard the feet of his saints, but the wicked will be silenced in darkness.

It is not by strength that one prevails; 10 those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed."

Mary

**used many of Hannah's ideas when she praised God for allowing her such a crucial part in His plan of salvation.**

Mary's Song

Luke 1 : 46 - 55

46 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord 47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, 48 for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, 49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name.

50 His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation.

51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

## SUMMARY

Psalm 100 calls on all the earth to shout for joy to the Lord, so this means each one of us is included, we are all chosen to praise God. The Psalmist goes on to tell us why we should do this. We do it because God is our creator, we belong to Him and He cares about us and for us, just as an eastern shepherd cared for his sheep. God's love for us won't run out, He doesn't get tired of us, or lose interest in us. He is faithful and He keeps His promises from each generation to the next.

**Mary understood the truths expressed in this psalm. She didn't know all that the future would hold for her and for the child she would bear, but she knew that God's purpose was much greater than the destiny of a single family. The child she carried was important to 'all generations ... forever'.**

**Mary's gratitude to God overflowed and she had to express her feelings in words. When she wanted to do this, she turned to ideas that had been expressed by another woman who also thanked God for her child. Mary knew her scriptures, and we can see many points of similarity between her hymn of praise to God and Hannah's.**

**Both Mary and Hannah start by telling of their feelings of joy in what God has done for them, but they don't just consider their own reactions. They turn their focus to God, considering the ways He has acted and dealt with people in the past. They consider God's character: His faithfulness, His justice, His love and mercy and they acknowledge His ongoing care from generation to generation.**

**We can sometimes wonder what good our faith is to our children, since we can't make them accept Jesus as their Saviour. Don't underestimate the value of a Godly heritage. Mary, a descendant of Abraham and David, knew that the faith of her ancestors had contributed to her own faith and to her part in God's plan. We can't make our children become Christians, but we can give them a foundation of knowledge about God. We can make sure that they have read the Bible and know what it says about many of the situations that they will face in life. We can introduce them to Jesus, but we have to leave the decision about what to do about Him to them. Our faith doesn't convert our children, but it makes it much easier for**

b) Why?

13) a) From the psalm, how are we to worship and praise God ?

b) How can we put these ideas into practice in our lives today?  
What are today's equivalents?

14) a) What aspects of God's character does the Psalmist highlight in verse 5?

b) Where have you seen these aspects of God shown to you in your life?

God calls us to praise Him, not for His benefit but for ours.  
Sometimes we can use our own words to praise God, but there are other times when we can't find the right words.

When this happens we can follow Mary's example and use the Bible to help us. Often we will find a passage which perfectly expresses our thoughts and feelings. So let's make use of this wonderful resource and join with God's people from generation to generation by praising Him sincerely, thoughtfully and often.

54 He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful 55 to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."

*Compare Mary's hymn of praise with Hannah's*

1) What is the first thought from each woman?

2) Mary calls God her Saviour (v47) Where does Hannah introduce the concept of a Saviour?

3) What phrase of Mary's corresponds to Hannah's description of God as a Rock?

4) Where do they each speak of God's mercy and His justice?

5) Can you give an example of a situation where God has shown:  
a) His mercy

b) His justice

6) How does Mary express her awareness of God's faithfulness to His past promises?

*We can't make our children or grandchildren accept Jesus and become Christians*

7) a) How do Mary's words give us hope that our faith can affect our descendants?

b) How can we encourage our children and grandchildren to have a faith in Jesus?

#### Simeon's Song

Luke 2: 25 - 34

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

29 "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. 30 For my eyes have seen your salvation, 31 which you have prepared in the sight of all people, 32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

33 The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him.

34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

8) What promise had the Holy Spirit made to Simeon?

9) What does Simeon recognise about Jesus in verse 30?

10) In verse 32 Simeon describes Jesus in two ways.

a) What are the two ways?

b) Which way would you expect a Jew to think of, and which is unexpected? Why?

c) How do these descriptions show Simeon's sensitivity to God's Spirit?

d) *Don't think you are ever too young or too old to be used by God. Is there anyone God would have you encourage, talk to about Him, or pray with? If there is, plan now when you will contact them & don't let the opportunity pass, it may not come again.*

11) How have the words of verses 34 and 35 come true?

*Mary, Hannah and Simeon all thank God for His mercy to them, but they then go on to talk about what God has done. Their focus is on God and not on themselves and how they will praise Him.*

*Psalm 100 gives us help in thinking about why we should praise God and how we can go about it.*

The Psalmist's Song of Praise

Psalm 100:1 - 5 ( A psalm. For giving thanks. )

1 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

2 Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

3 Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his ; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

12) a) Who is to shout for joy to the Lord, worship and praise Him?

Where did Mary's confidence in Jesus come from? Certainly she had lived with him for about 30 years now, but he hadn't performed miracles prior to this because John 2 v11 says "*this the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana in Galilee.*" Mary's faith in God and her pondering had brought her to the place of confidence in Jesus, as well as confidence in God.

But even the best of mothers can't help worrying about their children, and Mark 3 v 31 shows us a time when Mary and her other sons felt they needed to rescue Jesus from the consequences of his ministry. Crowds were following him, but he was already in trouble with the authorities. He had healed a man's shriveled hand on the Sabbath in the synagogue, in front of everyone. Mark 3 v 6 says "*the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.*"

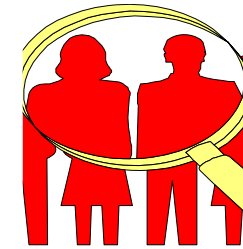
The danger Mary saw was real, and although she had been prepared to trust her own life to God, she felt she needed to remove Jesus from danger. Perhaps she could talk him into keeping a lower profile, or letting things quieten down for a while. Jesus wouldn't let her prevent Him carrying out His God-appointed ministry. His relationship with God came before all earthly relationships and responsibilities, and where they were a hindrance, He set them aside.

Is there anywhere I am getting in the way of God's will for someone I love? Do we, like Mary, feel we can trust God in our own lives but try to give him a helping hand when it comes to the hard things he asks of our children or grandchildren? Does God have to remove us from their life so they can have an unhindered relationship with Him?

Like Mary, we will make mistakes with our children and grandchildren, but, also like Mary, God calls us to persevere "*for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*" Galatians 6:9.

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### STUDY 3

## Chosen to Persevere

Any mother will be able to tell you that the announcement of a pregnancy is just the beginning of many years of hard work. The hopes, dreams and plans the mother-to-be has for her child are gradually modified by the realities of the child's actual abilities, personality and the limits imposed by circumstances.

However, our dreams often linger and there are times we find it difficult to accept the fact that our children will walk a different path to the one we had planned for them.

Mary was a very special woman, because God chose her to be the mother of His Son. Nevertheless, she experienced the same difficulties as other parents when it came to letting go of her plans for her son and allowing Him to live His own life.. In addition she had to come to terms with the special relationship He had with His Heavenly Father, and to accept that He must walk the path that He alone could walk to fulfil His destiny as Jesus, "the one who saves".

Our Christian lives usually start out with enthusiastic plans for the future. As time passes we find the routines and pressures of life can dull our first enthusiasm. But God calls us to persevere, just as we persevere through the years of childraising. In Galatians 6:9 Paul encourages us "*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*"

## Jesus' Childhood

Luke 2 : 41 - 53

41 Every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. 42 When he was twelve years old, they went up to the Feast, according to the custom.

43 After the Feast was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it.

44 Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. 45 When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.

46 After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.

48 When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

49 "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

50 But they did not understand what he was saying to them. 51 Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

- 1) **How old was Jesus when Mary and Joseph lost him in Jerusalem, and where did they find him?**
  
- 2) **What was he doing and what was the reaction of those around him?**
  
- 3) **What had Mary and Joseph failed to understand?**

*Mary and Joseph knew who their son was, but they still saw him as a little boy, they underestimated His relationship with His Heavenly Father.*

**Mary and Joseph had an extraordinary start to their family life. Not many people have a pregnancy announced by an angel! This was followed by the drama of visits by shepherds, travelers from far in the East and tales of angels and a special star. In obedience to an angel's message they fled to Egypt until the death of Herod the Great, when they returned to Nazareth to live.**

**We are not given any further details of Jesus' childhood until he reached the age of 12. It appears that there were no further unusual events that Mary thought worth reporting to Luke when he research the book that became the Gospel of Luke. After their traumatic beginning, Mary and Joseph were probably relieved to settle into a normal family life, and probably stopped expecting unusual things to happen.**

**Then came their trip to Jerusalem, when they experienced every parent's nightmare - a lost child! When they are reunited with their son, instead of apologising for staying behind Jesus rebukes them with " *Why were you searching for me?*" he asked. "*Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?*" (Luke 2 v 49) Verse 50 tells us that they didn't understand. The pressures of daily life had overtaken their memories of Jesus birth and they had underestimated His relationship with His Heavenly Father.**

**Am I underestimating the relationship my own child or grandchild can have directly with God? Am I encouraging them to trust God themselves, or in trying to help them, am I standing between them and God? Remember God has only sons and daughters, not grandchildren.**

**The scene changes to a family wedding, some 18 years later, and by this time Mary does have confidence in Jesus. A problem occurs and she goes to him expecting a solution. When I take a problem to Jesus do I expect a solution from him, or do I want to tell him what to do?**

**Mary had no suggestions of her own, she told the servants "whatever he says to you, do it". Am I prepared to accept whatever Jesus tells me to do in answer to my prayer, or will I only do what I want to do?**

*Even the best of mothers have periods of concern for their children, and Mary was no exception. She didn't always understand what Jesus was doing and she made mistakes when she tried to protect Him from God's will for Him. But she persevered and didn't give up on Him. Let us follow her example with our families, "for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." (Galatians 6:9)*

*Thinking about our families and friends, we can trust God with our own lives but try to give Him a helping hand when it comes to our children, grandchildren and friends.*

*For those I care about, am I walking with God, or getting in His way?*

**4) Have you ever underestimated a young person's understanding of God or spiritual matters? Would you share your experience?**

*We need to be careful that we encourage our young people in their spiritual growth and that we don't stand between them and their opportunities to learn more about God. Sometimes by wanting to protect them, we can stop them from taking a step of trust in God.*

Cutting the Ties

John 2:1 - 11

1 On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there,  
2 and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.  
3 When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."  
4 "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come."  
5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."  
6 Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons.  
7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim.  
8 Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet."  
9 They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now."  
10  
11 This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him.

**5) What did Mary do when she saw a problem?**

**6) What does Jesus' response to her indicate about her understanding of His ministry?**

*Mary may not have understood the big picture, but she persevered on her confidence in Jesus.*

7) a) What did she say to the servants?

b) When I take a problem to Jesus, am I prepared to accept whatever answer He gives, or do I tell Him what I want Him to do?

8) Can you think of any prayer that Jesus answered in a way you didn't expect? Will you explain?

9) a) How many miracles had Jesus performed before this?  
(John 2:11)

b) Where do you think Mary's confidence in Jesus came from?

Walking His own Path

Mark 3: 1 - 6

3:1 Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath.

3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored.

6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

10) a) Why were the Pharisees and Herodians plotting against Jesus?

b) Were His family justified in being concerned about Him?

Mark 3 : 20 - 21

20 Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

11) As Jesus fame grew, so did the crowds that followed Him.  
What further problem did this produce?

Mark 3: 31 - 35

31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

33 "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.

34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

11) What did Jesus' family try to do and why?

12) What was Jesus' reaction to His family's concern for Him?

13) Am I getting in God's way by trying to protect someone I love?  
If so, what will I do about it?

deep thinker, and her confidence in God was ultimately rewarded by the gift of Jesus' own Holy Spirit. Not just to her, or to her sons, but to all of us who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

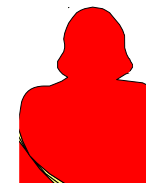
Are we prepared, like Mary, to place our confidence in God and let Him take care of whatever consequences are brought by our obedience to His will - in the little things, as well as the big things? Will we accept His comfort when we are suffering, as well as accepting His blessing in the good times?

God has chosen us to be His children, His treasured possessions. But He chose us for a purpose, to declare His praises and to bear fruit that will last. How much of my time is spent on things that will last for eternity? When do I take opportunities to praise God who loves me and has forgiven my sins through Jesus' sacrifice in my place?

God's treatment of us shows us how to treat others. As God's children we need to have a 'family resemblance' to our Heavenly Father and to treat others as He has treated us. That doesn't mean that we will always agree with other people, or even other Christians. It does mean that we will remember that each person was created in God's image and treat them with dignity and respect, regardless of the way they treat us.

God didn't just choose us, He bought us back from the penalty of our sins. That's grace, and it cost us nothing. Are we, like Mary, prepared to trust, to praise, to persevere and to suffer when God's plan for us involves difficulties?

## Chosen by God



### STUDY 4

## Chosen to Suffer

Mary was given the greatest privilege a human being could experience. She became the mother of God the Son, when He came to earth as part of the human race. However, her privilege came with a cost.

Mary experienced the cost of releasing her son to walk the path God had prepared for Him, and watched as He suffered the consequences. That is a cost many parents of Christian young people experience. God's plan for our children may not be the same as ours. However, Mary's cost was unlike that of any other parent, because her son was the only one who could pay for the sin of the whole world. Her son was unique, her pain was unique, but her blessing was unique as well.

As we follow Jesus we will also experience suffering, and there may be times when we wonder if the pain is really worth the benefit. At these times we need to remember that although we are chosen to suffer, we are also chosen by God as His children, holy and blameless in His sight. We are God's treasured possession, bought back from the curse of sin at the cost of the life of Jesus. That's how valuable we are to God.

Since we are worth so much to Him, we can be confident that whenever we are suffering He will be there with us. He will never leave us nor forsake us - He's promised! (Hebrews 13 v 5)

***Read again John's eyewitness account of the crucifixion of Jesus***

John 19

16 Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. 17 Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). 18 Here they crucified him, and with him two others--one on each side and Jesus in the middle.

19 Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. 20 Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek.

21 The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."

22 Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did.

25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," 27 and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

28 Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." 29 A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. 30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

***The blessing of Christmas came at the cost of Calvary.***

Luke 2

34 Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."

**1) What did Simeon predict about Mary?****2) Mary was not left to endure the pain of her son's death alone. Who stood with Mary, Jesus' mother at the foot of the cross?**

## SUMMARY

After failing to stop Jesus' public ministry, or even persuade Him to keep a lower profile, our next sight of Mary is when we meet her at the foot of Jesus' cross. She is supported there by that little band of women whose loving loyalty was rewarded by having their names recorded in God's own word: his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

What are Mary's emotions now? Heartbreak, surely, all that she had feared had come true. But God never lets us down, He had called Mary to a difficult life and although she was "blessed among women" she experienced the blessing at great emotional cost. What does Jesus do? He doesn't remind her that God has given her other sons. In the midst of his agony he uses his ebbing strength to give her his most beloved disciple to look after her.

*"Dear woman, here is your son" and to the disciple "Here is your mother". (John 19 v 26,27)*

Mary and John didn't have to accept Jesus' gift. They could have refused, claiming no one could take Jesus' place in their lives. But they didn't refuse.

*John 19 v27 "from that time on, this disciple took her into his home."*

Let's ask ourselves some questions about accepting God's way rather than wanting our own. Is there anything or anyone I am are refusing to let go? Does God have a new ministry or a new person He wants me to minister to, but I am determined to hold onto the same things and people as before? What new thing does God want to do in my life? Will I choose to let Him?

Our last picture of Mary is in Acts 1 v 14. After Jesus' return to heaven, his followers returned to Jerusalem, as he commanded to await the coming of the holy spirit. *"They all joined together constantly in prayer along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers."* Notice the addition. There was no mention of Jesus' brothers at the cross and it was John, not one of Jesus' brothers who took Mary into his home. But here, after Jesus resurrection, His 40 days of teaching, and His return to heaven, we find Mary has the blessing of her other sons joining with her in constant prayer.

She had to wait and suffer much, but Mary was a ponderer, a

*When we are wondering if the suffering we experience through being Christians is worth it, and most of us will wonder about that at some time in our lives, Ephesians 1 gives us help and encouragement.*

Ephesians 1 : 4 - 6

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

13) When did God choose us, and what did He choose us to be?

14) What did He predestine us to be?

15) What has He also given us in Jesus?

*God's grace has cost us nothing, but it cost Him the life of His son. Whatever we suffer, we do not have to suffer separation from God, because Jesus has gone through that for us. God's grace simply asks that we accept all that Jesus has done for us. Have you accepted His death in your place? Do you follow Him as your Lord and Saviour? In the way you live your daily life, can other people notice your 'family resemblance' to Him?*

3) Even in His pain, Jesus considered His mother's suffering and her future . What arrangement did He make for her welfare?

4) John and Mary could have rejected Jesus' plan, claiming that no-one could replace Him. What did they actually do?

*(to consider, not necessarily to share)*

5) a) Is there anything or anyone in your life that you are refusing to let go of?

b) Does God have a new ministry or a new person He wants you to minister to, but you prefer to hold onto the same things and people as before?

c) Is there anyone who is more important to you than God's will for you?

Acts 1

13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

6) a) Jesus' brothers are not mentioned in the record of those who were at His cross. What change has occurred by the time Jesus ascended to heaven? (Acts 1 v 14)

b) How do you think this would affect Mary?

Deuteronomy 7 : 6 - 8

6 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. 7 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples.

8 But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers

*In Deuteronomy 7, God is speaking to the people of Israel.*

7) a) **What does He say He has done for them?**

b) **Why did He choose them? What were not the reasons?**

1 Peter 2 : 9 - 10

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

*In 1 Peter, God is talking to those who come to Jesus. (1 Peter 2 v 4)*

8) a) **What does He say He has done for us?**

b) **For what purpose has He chosen us?**

c) **Suggest some practical ways we can do this.**

John 15 : 16

16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last.

9) a) **What purpose does John 15 v 16 say we were chosen for?**

b) **What sort of things fit this description?**

Colossians 3 : 12 - 14

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

10) **From Colossians 3, what responsibilities do we have as God's chosen people?**

11) **What are some of the special considerations we need to make when we are dealing with fellow Christians?**

12) a) **What does verse 14 say we should do about love? Is it a command or a suggestion?**

b) **How does that effect someone who says they've 'fallen out of love'?**