



Whatever you have said, Lord

By Beth Jones

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please contact: Beth Jones
E-mail: elizabethdjones@gmail.com



Beth Jones, Christian speaker, writer, wife and mom
Encouraging women to seek deeper intimacy with Jesus Christ, using their spiritual gifts for His glory

Tablet Of My Heart
<http://www.bethjones.net>
elizabethdjones@gmail.com

Beth's other websites:
Website for speakers & writers: <http://www.bethjones.net/writingroom>

Website for homeschoolers:
<http://www.bethjones.net/thewordhomeschoolingwithbethjones>

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This week we celebrate the birth of our savior Jesus Christ with our family and friends. As I reflected on the Christmas story today, what stood out to me was **Mary's response of great faith** when the angel Gabriel gave her the sudden news that she, a teen virgin, was going to have a baby boy and he would be the Son of God Jesus.

Let's read the story from Luke 1: 26-38:

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

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. "Don't be afraid, Mary!" the angel told her, "for you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. 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. And he will reign over Israel forever; his kingdom will never end!"

Mary asked the angel, "But how can this happen? I am a virgin." 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. What's more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age. People used to say she was barren, but she's now in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her."

Mary's response immediately to the angel is very humble. Who is she to be chosen by God? What does he mean? Is he really an angel, she must have wondered. Gabriel tells her that she has found favor with God and will have God's son.

Mary immediately used discernment in the situation. She wanted to know how this could happen, since she was a virgin. If the angel had told her that she was to have sex with someone outside of marriage, she would have known this wasn't from God because God never violates His own word which prohibits sex outside marriage. She is told that she would conceive miraculously by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Even though she was given an incredible honor and favor by God, Mary's situation was not going to be easy. She was engaged to be married to Joseph. It was known that she wasn't married and hadn't had sex yet. People would think she had gotten pregnant before marriage – either by Joseph or someone else. The culture back in Mary's time was even more strict on moral matters than it is today (even though God's word never changes!). **She was at risk for being stoned to death.**

Her fiance' Joseph decided to quietly put her away. He didn't want her to die and obviously loved her very much, because he didn't want her shamed and humiliated, either. But an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream, telling him that Mary had conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and would have God's Son, the Messiah.

Joseph believed her, but not everyone else – maybe even her own family – would believe her. She was probably an outcast from this time forward.

Later it was prophesied to her by Simeon in the temple that a sword would pierce her soul (Luke 2: 35) – probably all that she saw her son go through, especially at his crucifixion.

This is a test!

You know how you're driving down the road when suddenly a loud, annoying, beeping noise interrupts your favorite Third Day song, and you hear, "This is a test of the Emergency Broadcast System...this is only a test!"

I believe that when the angel Gabriel gave Mary the news, it was a test from God to see what her response was. Of course, God is all-knowing and even knows the future, so He already knew what she would say. He saw her faithful, passionate, believing heart. **But I believe that Mary had a choice as to how she would respond to God's word – just as we do today.**

God created us with a free will. Mary could have responded in fear and unbelief, like Zechariah the father of John the Baptist did, and refused to believe God. She could have even told the angel, **"No, this assignment is too big for me. It's too much to handle.** Pick someone else!"

Then God could have chosen someone more willing. I believe God showed Mary a part of what she would be facing when the angel came to her with the news – that she would face some rejection, even outright persecution for her faith and for saying yes to God.

Yet Mary was willing to be used in a great way by God, no matter what the cost was. She said yes.

Lysa Terkeust, wife, mother, and President of Proverb 31 Ministries, writes about saying yes to God in her book, *What Happens When Women Walk in Faith: Trusting God Takes You To Amazing Places*:

“Break-throughs happen when we get about the business of honoring God moment by moment, step-by-step, day by day by what we do and, more importantly, with the thoughts we think *while* we do. People who don’t say yes to the Lord can still live a good life. But only those who fully embrace God can experience the wonder and awe of a “yes” heart that lives the *great* life He intends. What is God calling you to do today? You may never be called to adopt children from a foreign land, but God is calling you, wooing you, pursuing you, inviting you to something richer with Him. May your ordinary be invaded with His extraordinary invitation to press through the famine phase and to live life His way!”¹

What about you? Will you say yes to God, like Mary the mother of Jesus did – no matter the cost? Will you obey and trust God with His plan, His purpose for your life?

God has great things ahead for you and me in 2011. Let’s respond humbly like Mary did and say, “May everything you have said about me come true!”

No matter what other people would say or think of her, she believed God. Other people will try to put labels on you, another identity than the one God has for you. Other people probably thought Mary had sinned, having sex with Joseph or someone else, and getting pregnant before marriage. They probably viewed her as a tainted, promiscuous woman. Yet God saw her as favored, hand-chosen by Him for a holy and incredible purpose.

The world and satan will lie to you about your identity. **We need to know our true identity in Christ, who we really are, who God has created us to be – and how Jesus’ blood has redeemed us.**

Whatever God has said about us, that is what we should believe. Study His word to find out what God says about you. His word is full of promises and hope for you. Jeremiah 29: 11 says God has GREAT things ahead for you.

Let’s be like Mary and simply believe and trust God. Let’s say yes to God today – and we will see the impossible in and through our lives for God’s glory!

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¹ *What Happens When Women Walk In Faith: Trusting God Takes You To Amazing Places*, Lisa Terkeust, Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, OR, 2005, p. 66.

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www.bethjones.net

elizabethdjone@gmail.com



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