

6-SESSION BIBLE STUDY  
WITH OPTIONAL VIDEOS

JACKIE GREEN  
LAUREN GREEN MCAFEE

How One Ordinary Life Can  
Make an Eternal Difference

# Legacy

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LAUREN GREEN MCAFEE

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Make an Eternal Difference

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Authors	4
Introduction	5
SESSION ONE: Courage & Faith	6
SESSION TWO: Boldness & Witness	38
SESSION THREE: Compassion & Rescue	72
SESSION FOUR: Prayer & Tenacity	102
SESSION FIVE: Generosity & Loyalty	134
SESSION SIX: Wisdom & Teaching	164
Leader Guide	193
Endnotes	202

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Jackie Green wears many different hats as she navigates writing, speaking, organizing events for women, being a wife and mother to six and GiGi to four. She is the co-founder of Museum of the Bible and serves on the board of several organizations. She is also the founder of Women of Legacy—an effort to help women discover and leave an eternal legacy. She has been married for thirty-five years to her husband, Steve, whom she actively supports in his role as President of

Hobby Lobby and Chairman of the Board at Museum of the Bible. She has co-authored two books: *This Dangerous Book* with her husband, Steve Green, and *Only One Life* with her daughter, Lauren Green McAfee. Although she enjoys traveling and meeting people worldwide, her favorite place to be is home with her family. Connect with Jackie at [www.jackiegreen.us](http://www.jackiegreen.us).



Lauren Green McAfee is a communicator, connector, and coffee enthusiast with a heart to engage others with the Bible. While earning her graduate degrees in pastoral counseling and theology, Lauren worked for her father, Steve Green, as he founded Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. Today, Lauren works at the Hobby Lobby corporate office and pursues a PhD in ethics and public policy at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Connect with Lauren at [laurenmacafee.com](http://laurenmacafee.com) and on Instagram: [@laurenmacafee](https://www.instagram.com/laurenmacafee).

## INTRODUCTION

You were created by God to impact others with your life.

God used women throughout the Bible to accomplish His purposes, and He continues to use women today to advance His kingdom. In the pages of this study, we will share inspiring stories of women who made an impact. But shaping a powerful legacy is not just for the elite few.

So what is “legacy”? Think of legacy as that which lives on beyond you. And realize it is a story that you are writing daily, even in the mundane.

My (Jackie) grandmother-in-law, and my (Lauren) great-grandmother, Marie Green, often quoted to her family a line from a poem by the missionary C. T. Studd. The portion she emphasized was, “Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.”<sup>1</sup>

We are grateful to be in a family that has intentionally shaped our legacy for generations. We are beneficiaries of this legacy, and we pray we are faithful to continue living it with intentionality.

You don’t have to come from a family with a kingdom legacy to dive into the adventure of shaping your own. Each of us, regardless of our circumstances and context, has the opportunity to know God better and to use our influence to make Him known.

Women of legacy understand that our victories can and do impact countless others, including generations yet to be born. So, together, let’s be a generation of legacy-building leaders, spending our one life using our gifts and strengths in His service. Because only what’s done for Christ will last.

*Jackie + Lauren*

*session one:*

**COURAGE  
& FAITH**



## DISCUSS

What is one thing that stood out to you from the video?

What do you think it would have been like to live in the time of Jesus?

Do you have faith to believe that God can make seemingly impossible things happen in your life? Explain.

How have you seen God do the impossible?

Would you say you're a person of courage and faith? Why or why not?

How have you seen someone step out in courageous faith? Is God currently calling you to do that?

## INTRODUCTION

*“Faith does not eliminate questions. But faith knows where to take them.”<sup>2</sup>*

**ELISABETH ELLIOT**

In 1955, Jim Elliot, Peter Fleming, and Ed McCully, who were all—along with their wives—missionaries in Ecuador, felt compelled by God to bring the gospel to the Waodani Indians (known as the “Auca Indians” at the time).<sup>3</sup> The Waodani were an unreached people group located in the Andes Mountains. This tribe had little or no contact with the civilized world, and its members were known to be very violent. But the missionaries’ calling from God and compulsion to reach the lost for Christ superseded any fear they had.

These three men teamed up with Nate Saint, a pilot for Missionary Aviation Fellowship, and began to take small steps to reach the Waodani. For three months they made flights over the village, dropping gifts and supplies in the hopes that their efforts would build trust and eventual friendship. On Tuesday, January 3, 1956, the men decided to land the plane on a river sandbar about four miles from the tribe. They also invited Roger Youderian, another missionary working with native Indians in South America, to join them. They set up camp and began to fly over the village, inviting the tribe to meet them. On Friday morning, they had their first visitors. Though this encounter was encouraging, by Saturday afternoon their wives back at the mission station lost all contact with them. Eventually, the wives learned that a group of the tribe members had come back to the missionaries’ camp on Saturday morning and killed all five men by spearing them to death.<sup>4</sup> It seemed their courageous actions had a tragic end.

But the story wasn't over.

After Jim's death, his wife, Elisabeth, and their 10-month-old daughter, Valerie, stayed in Ecuador to continue mission work with the Quichua Indians, a tribe she and Jim worked with prior to his attempt to reach the Waodani. While continuing this work after her husband's death, Elisabeth providentially met two runaway Waodani women, who ended up living with her for a year. These two women became the key to opening the door for Elisabeth to work with the tribe who killed her husband and the other four missionaries.<sup>5</sup> Elisabeth and her young daughter entered the Waodani village and began to share the gospel. Joining her in this missionary effort was Rachel Saint, Nate Saint's sister. These two women had the courage and faith to live among and share the gospel with those who had taken the lives of their loved ones. During their time with the tribe, Elisabeth and Rachel saw many Waodani come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, including the men who killed the missionaries. What a legacy of courage and faith these men and women left behind!

While most of us know and understand the call we have to go into all the world and make disciples, too many of us never fulfill that call because of fear. But Paul said we have not been given a "spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and sound judgment" (2 Tim. 1:7). We will never share the gospel, stand for truth, or contend for the faith the way God has called us to if fear rules our hearts. We must move forward in courage and faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit, with our eyes on Jesus. That's a legacy worth following.

Think of a time you wrestled between fear and courage. Which did you choose, and what was the tipping point?

How did your faith play a part?

## DAY 1 **COURAGE: ESTHER**

### *A QUEEN WITH A SECRET*

Go back in time almost five hundred years before the birth of Christ and you'll find a woman who struggled between fear and courage. The danger was real and the stakes were high. But to grasp the full fear she faced, you have to begin with her backstory. It started in 483 BC, over one hundred years after the Jews were taken into Babylonian captivity.<sup>6</sup> One group of exiles had returned to Jerusalem, but more remained even after Babylon fell in 539 BC.

Some Jews wound up in Persia, which rose as the dominant kingdom in the Middle East after Babylon's fall. There, Xerxes the Great (also known as King Ahasuerus) ruled from 486 to 465 BC.<sup>7</sup> Arrogant and impulsive, the king forever banished his queen, Vashti, from his presence when she refused his request to appear before his guests at a banquet to display her beauty (Esth. 1). The king searched for Vashti's replacement from among the most beautiful girls in his kingdom and chose Esther as his new queen (Esth. 2). What Esther kept secret was that she was a Jewish exile and orphan, raised by her cousin Mordecai.

One day, a conflict arose between Mordecai and Haman. Haman was a nobleman the king had honored who expected all the royal officials at the king's gate to kneel before him, and Mordecai was the only official who refused. Learning that Mordecai was a Jew, Haman schemed to kill not only Mordecai but all the Jews in the kingdom (Esth. 3). He convinced the king to issue an edict that on a given date about a year in the future, all Jewish men, women, and children in the kingdom were to be killed (Esth. 4).

Read Esther 4:1-8. What emotions do you see portrayed by Mordecai and Esther based on the news they received in this passage?

Read Esther 4:8-12. What specifically did Mordecai ask Esther to do and what was her response?

Mordecai knew Esther held a place of influence before the king and he wanted her to leverage that influence to save her people. But Esther knew it wasn't as simple as strolling into the throne room and making a request. Approaching the king without being summoned was likely signing her own death warrant.

Fear initially kept Esther from taking the necessary steps to help her people. At this point she put preserving her own life above saving her fellow countrymen.

What do you think Esther expected Mordecai to say or do when she explained her situation in verse 11?

### **THE VOICE OF FEAR**

Esther wasn't just being a drama queen. Her life truly would be in jeopardy if she approached the king at her own initiative. And his reputation as a despot not to be crossed was well established. So her fear was genuine and valid. The worst possible scenario was whispering in her ear, and it was hard to ignore.

No doubt, you've heard the voice of fear. It says the task in front of you is impossible. It says you're not smart enough for your job, and soon everyone is going to discover how incapable you really are. It tells you your boss is going to fire you or your husband is going to leave you. When you should be sleeping, fear reminds you of your manager who intimidates you or the bills you can't pay. And when you find yourself living the day-after-day struggle of loving a prodigal child or fighting cancer or caring for an aging parent, fear greets you every morning with

the unwelcome forecast that today will be worse than yesterday, and things won't get better anytime soon.

Fear plays a broken record in your mind of all the worst possible outcomes. Fear takes your emotions hostage. It sabotages your body with sweaty palms, a racing heart, trembling limbs, and a gnawing in your gut. If you listen to fear, it will tell you to run when you should take a stand. It will urge you to keep quiet when you should speak up. Fear will prompt you to quit when you should stay, and linger when you should leave. It's no wonder the Bible addresses the topic of fear so much. Over three hundred times God commanded us in so many words to *stop being afraid!*<sup>8</sup>

How has fear negatively affected your decision making?

When have you most recently allowed fear to consume you and spiritually paralyze you?

### **CHOOSING COURAGE OVER FEAR**

God speaks to us through His Word, but sometimes He also speaks to us through other people. In Esther's case, it was Mordecai who challenged her to choose courage over her fear.

Read Esther 4:13-14. Write out Mordecai's response to Esther in your own words.

Mordecai redirected Esther to focus on God's calling and purpose for her life rather than the difficulty that was before her.

When you know God has called you to a purpose, you can step into that role—no matter how frightening—because you are confident that God is in control. Fear may not disappear, but that's when courage becomes stronger than fear.

Esther had reason to be afraid. She probably thought, *Who am I to intervene and save my people from Haman's slaughter? I don't even belong in the palace to begin with. If these people knew who I really am, they'd know I'm not qualified to be here. They'd throw me out.* She truly had done nothing in her own ability to become queen. Mordecai rightly understood Esther was where she was at that moment in time because God had placed her there by divine appointment.

How has God positioned you where you are in life “for such a time as this”? What people are depending on your courage?

What is God calling you to say or do that requires you to move outside your comfort zone?

***“IF I PERISH, I PERISH.”***

Courage takes action to do the right thing without always having the assurance that everything will turn out OK. And honestly, things don't always turn out OK. Sometimes the courageous suffer, hurt, or lose. Sometimes they die in the battle. No person better exemplifies courage than Jesus Christ, who, knowing the agony that lay ahead, steadfastly pursued God's purpose for Him to die for the sins of the world. Jesus took the path of courage to meet our dire need, notwithstanding the personal risk or cost to Himself.

In what sense are you standing in the legacy of Jesus' courage?

The legacy of courage you leave to someone who follows in your path might begin the day you stand up to do the right thing, or the day you walk away from the wrong thing.

When have you seen someone demonstrate courage by standing up to do what's right? By walking away from what's wrong?

Are you currently facing a situation where God is calling you to take one of these courageous steps? Explain.

If you're not currently facing such a situation, at some point you will. Don't let fear win the day. Don't let Satan use his favorite weapon to paralyze you. Rather, listen to the voice of the Father saying, "Take heart. Fear not. Be strong and courageous." Trust Him and move forward.

**IN YOUR OWN WORDS:** Based on what you've studied today, how would you define courage?

**IN YOUR OWN LIFE:** Based on what you've learned today, what is the next step God is challenging you to take toward building a legacy of courage?

## DAY 2 **COURAGE: ESTHER**

*"A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for."*<sup>9</sup>

**JOHN A. SHEDD**

Courage marks the heroes and heroines of our favorite stories. Whether from the Bible, childhood fairy tales, or modern movies, we love those ordinary people who boldly take a stand to face down life's "giants."

What is it exactly that qualifies some people as exceptionally courageous? Clinical psychologist Melanie Greenberg, PhD, identifies six distinct ways we characterize courage:

1. Feeling fear yet choosing to act
2. Following your heart
3. Persevering in the face of adversity
4. Standing up for what is right
5. Expanding your horizons; letting go of the familiar
6. Facing suffering with dignity or faith<sup>10</sup>

As you study Esther's story again today, consider which of these characteristics of courage she demonstrated. Ask yourself: *Which ones do I need to cultivate?*

### **JUST SAY NO?**

Skim Esther 4:5-11 from yesterday's study to recall Mordecai's request of Esther and her hesitation.

Esther already had reason to feel she didn't belong and wasn't entitled to be queen. She held a secret: She was a Jew in exile and an orphan, living in a Persian palace in the role of queen. Now she was facing a bully determined to murder the cousin who raised her and wipe out all her people. The clock was ticking. And her cousin, Mordecai, asked her to go before the king and plead for mercy to save the Jews. But there were so many reasons not to.

Put yourself in Esther's place. What might be some of the reasons not to comply with Mordecai's request?

Lots of reasons probably went through Esther's head. She'd have to reveal her identity. She could be banished from the court. Haman could take revenge on her. She could be executed. She could fail.

### ***INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE ZONE***

Regardless of the reasons, Esther needed to move from her safe spot to take action. She needed to step outside her comfort zone to make a difference. It would take courage.

How would you define "comfort zone"? How easily do you move outside of yours?

What is something God is calling you to do that will require you to step outside of that zone?

### **NOW OR LATER**

When it comes to parenting, we sometimes hear about aiming for “first-time obedience” or “immediate obedience.” The point is, the parent shouldn’t have to ask twice; the child should immediately carry out what he or she has been told to do. Esther did what Mordecai asked, but she didn’t jump right up and run to the king’s chambers. In fact, she did all these things first:

- Called on all the Jews to fast and pray for her for three days (4:15-16);
- Approached the king and invited him and Haman to a banquet the same day (5:1-4);
- At that banquet, invited the king and Haman to another banquet the next day (5:5-8).

**Was Esther procrastinating? Or was she being smart and deliberate in planning her strategy?**

There is a difference between being courageous and being careless. Endless deliberation can become simple procrastination that prevents us from ever taking action. On the other hand, there is a place for adequate prayer, planning, and preparation.

**Read Esther 7:1-6a. What actions did Esther take that were surely outside her comfort zone?**

### **NO TURNING BACK**

When fear tells us to play it safe, God calls us to choose courage and step outside our comfort zone to do what is right. To answer God’s call and choose courage is to walk right into the thing we fear regardless of

the cost. Courage keeps us moving toward obedience, trembling but resolute.

Consider Isaiah's prophecy concerning Jesus and the courageous obedience He would display in the face of suffering. Underline any phrase below that shows determination to obey God in the face of terror. Circle the one that most inspires you to emulate His courage.

"The Lord GOD has opened my ear,  
and I was not rebellious;  
I did not turn back.  
I gave my back to those who beat me,  
and my cheeks to those  
who tore out my beard.  
I did not hide my face from scorn and spitting.  
The Lord GOD will help me;  
therefore I have not been humiliated;  
therefore I have set my face like flint,  
and I know I will not be put to shame."

ISAIAH 50:5-7

Read Esther 7:6b-10. When Esther acted with courage, what happened to the things she might have feared, such as revealing her identity, Haman's revenge, being banished, and being executed?

The God who calls us to courageous obedience does not leave us to succeed or fail on our own. He is the same God who promises, "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20). As we obey, He acts to do what only He can do. He can engineer the outcome of circumstances and the timing of events (Ex. 14; Josh. 10:1-15). He can sway people's hearts (Gen. 39:21; Ex. 3:21; 9:12; 10:1,27; 11:10; 12:36; 14:8; Josh. 11:20). He can solve

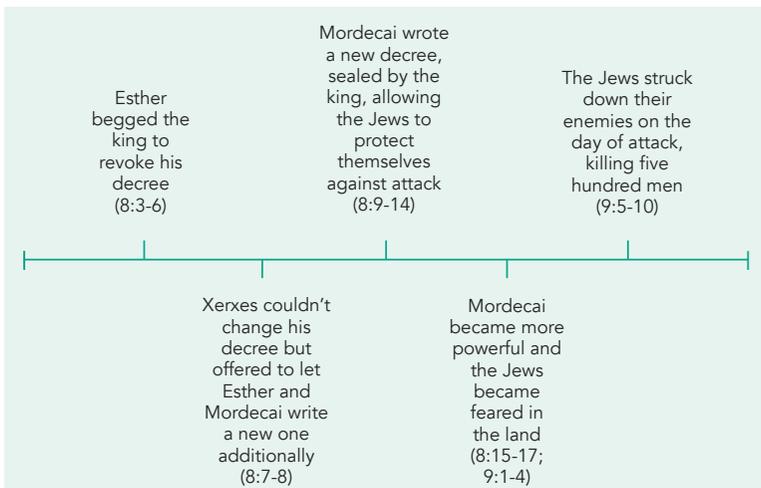
problems in ways we could never imagine. When we see no possible solution, He makes a way. Ours is a mountain-moving God (Job 9:4-5).

### **FINAL IMPACT**

Esther now stood in an in-between place. With Haman out of the picture, it was like a movie where the danger seems to be over, but then you realize it's not. She had delivered her message unscathed. But there was still an irreversible decree quickly approaching. The king's order had been given to kill all Jews in the kingdom on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar (3:12-13). Once the king issued a decree sealed with his signet ring, it could not be revoked. The clock was ticking, and even King Xerxes couldn't stop his own decree.

Would Esther risk everything to do the right thing—the courageous thing—and still fail to accomplish what she set out to do? Success is not always guaranteed to the courageous. But it's nearly impossible to make an impact, indeed to leave a legacy, if we don't move outside our comfort zone. Esther chapters 8–10 reveal how Esther's courageous actions did succeed and establish a legacy in the process.

Here's how events unfolded:



Esther not only survived but gained respect and reward for her bravery. More than that, Esther's willingness to risk her life to save her people left a legacy that long outlived her. On the two days following the attack, the Jews rested and celebrated with a day of feasting and joy (9:17). Those two days became an annual celebration of feasting and gift giving to commemorate the time when the Jews escaped slaughter at the hands of their enemies. The feast was named "Purim," which means 'lots,' a reference to the lots Haman cast to determine which day he would have the Jews slaughtered (3:7).<sup>11</sup>

"The Jews bound themselves, their descendants, and all who joined with them to a commitment that they would not fail to celebrate these two days each and every year according to the written instructions and according to the time appointed. These days are remembered and celebrated by every generation, family, province, and city, so that these days of Purim will not lose their significance in Jewish life and their memory will not fade from their descendants."

ESTHER 9:27-28

Esther's legacy lives to this day as Jews still celebrate Purim. Your brave steps, big and small, will also leave a legacy of courage for those who come behind you.

**IN YOUR OWN WORDS:** Based on what you've studied today, how would you further define courage?

**IN YOUR OWN LIFE:** What big or small steps of courage is God calling you to take today?

## DAY 3 FAITH: MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS

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*"A man of courage is also full of faith."*<sup>12</sup>

MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO

### **FAITH TAKES COURAGE**

Addressing the Cornell University graduating class of 2008, Pulitzer Prize-nominated writer, actress, and civil rights activist Maya Angelou argued that courage is the most important virtue because without it no other virtue can be practiced consistently.

Drawing on her years of experience, the then eighty-year-old Angelou said, "You can be kind and true and fair and generous and just, and even merciful, occasionally. But to be that thing time after time, you have to really have courage."<sup>13</sup>

Do you agree? Disagree? How does it take courage to practice consistently some of the other virtues covered in this Bible study?

Boldness?

Compassion?

Tenacity?

Loyalty?

Prayerfulness?

(Faithfulness in) Witnessing?

Faith?

In the next two days, we'll look at the virtue of faith in the example of Mary, the mother of Jesus. As we do, consider how it takes courage to believe God and obey Him when you don't have all the facts and you don't know how everything will turn out. Ask yourself: *What was the legacy Mary left by her simple faith? And what will mine be?*

#### **A PRIOR ANGELIC VISIT**

**Read Luke 1:26-30.**

In verse 26, Luke notes that the angelic visit to Mary comes “in the sixth month.” The context for this time reference is from the passage immediately preceding (vv. 5-25), where we learn that Mary's older cousin, Elizabeth, who was barren, had miraculously conceived and was expecting her first baby. Elizabeth was then in “the sixth month” of her pregnancy (v. 36). This is significant for a couple of reasons besides the relationship between Mary and Elizabeth. For one thing, God was laying out the plan for the entry of His Son into the world. Elizabeth's baby would be John the Baptist, the one who would go before the Messiah to prepare people to turn their hearts toward Him.

But there's another interesting connection to Mary in Elizabeth's back story. It has to do with how Elizabeth and her husband got the news that they were expecting. Long before sonograms, social media posts, and

gender reveal parties, news about these sorts of things traveled much slower, so maybe Mary had heard, and maybe she hadn't. But when Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, got the news of his wife's pregnancy, he had trouble believing it even though it was announced by an angel.

Zechariah was a priest serving in the temple on the day Gabriel appeared to tell him the good news that Elizabeth would bear him a son. But Zechariah doubted: "How can I know this?" he contended. "For I am an old man, and my wife is well along in years" (1:18). Because of Zechariah's unbelief, the messenger of God struck him mute until the day of John's birth. As previously noted, news traveled much slower then. Mary may or may not have known how her cousin's husband was suffering for his unbelief. But in putting Zechariah's encounter with the angel Gabriel just before Mary's in his Gospel, Luke gave us a striking juxtaposition between how two different people handled the challenge of trusting God with things they could not understand or explain.

### **GABRIEL RETURNS**

As we just noted, Gabriel's visit to Mary wasn't his first trip to earth. He had visited Zechariah six months prior, and hundreds of years earlier he had appeared to the prophet Daniel (Dan. 8:15-17; 9:21). He always came to deliver important messages from God. But this angelic visit was a first for young Mary, and Gabriel's appearance must have stunned her, to say the least.

From Luke 1:26-27, list at least three things you know about Mary:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

In Mary's day, girls typically got engaged in their early teens. Mary could have been as young as thirteen at the time.

What were you doing in your early teens? What were your interests? What occupied most of your time?

If you've been engaged, what plans were you making during that time?

While your teen years and Mary's would have probably been quite different, life appeared to be going along as planned for an ordinary girl in a small Palestinian town until Gabriel showed up.

Why do you think Mary was deeply troubled by Gabriel's greeting? Was her fear justified? Explain.

**"OKAY, BUT HOW?"**

Read Luke 1:31-34.

When Gabriel started giving Mary the details of her future, the words must have come across as incredible. Put yourselves in her shoes. What would you have thought? Probably something like: *This can't be real. Is this really happening? Nobody knows the future. Really???*

Mary asked, "How can this be?" It was a natural question. But why was she not rebuked as Zechariah was (1:19-20)? Mary's question was one of wonder and clarification, whereas Zechariah's was one of doubt. No virgin had ever become pregnant before, let alone with the Savior of the world! It was impossible. It simply didn't occur within the realm of natural events. How could it be?

What's one thing God has promised in Scripture that you can't comprehend how He will accomplish?

Check out Gabriel's response in Luke 1:35-37.

If we had been in Mary's shoes, we might have persisted with, "Could you break that down a little further, please? Put it in plain English (or Aramaic). Explain so I can understand how the Holy Spirit is going to come upon me, and the power of the Most High overshadow me, and I will end up pregnant." But the incarnation doesn't make sense to our limited understanding. That God Almighty became a man and was born as a human baby shatters the laws of nature and defies human comprehension. In the end, how God would accomplish it was not the point. All Mary needed to know was what God had demonstrated with Elizabeth and Zechariah, which Gabriel stated in verse 37.

Write verse 37 here:

When have you seen God accomplish what you knew to be humanly impossible?

### ***ARE YOU IN?***

Sure, it's great to hear that you're highly favored with God and you've been selected for a special project. At least it's great while you're alone talking with the angel. But what's it going to be like when you're back with your family and friends and your belly starts to grow? People start to stare and whisper. Your fiancé doubts your faithfulness and feels betrayed. Your own family members look at you differently. Pregnancy for an unmarried girl in that time likely meant losing her fiancé, family,

and reputation. Attributing the pregnancy to the Holy Spirit could make Mary sound like a lunatic.<sup>14</sup>

Mary didn't ask for this to happen. Gabriel delivered the message and Mary responded with faith. She was confronted with a socially unacceptable situation, and while she may have had feelings of fear and doubt, she did not rely on those feelings to determine her response. She relied on her trust and faith in God.

Read 1:38 and write Mary's response in your own words.

Are you currently facing life situations that require you to rely on what you know to be true about God because your feelings don't match that truth? Explain.

## **GOD-PLEASING FAITH**

"Now without faith it is impossible to please God."

HEBREWS 11:6

Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as "the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen." Faith is about trusting God when we don't have all the answers and nothing adds up. We believe Him not because we see the clear explanation; we believe Him even when there is no explanation. Faith is trusting without seeing.

This is precisely the kind of faith Jesus encouraged in Mark 9:14-27. The father of a demon-possessed boy brought his son to Jesus and said, "If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us" (v. 22). Jesus responded, "If you can? Everything is possible for the one who believes" (v. 23). And the father cried out, "I do believe; help my unbelief!" (v. 24).

What is God challenging you to believe right now?  
What is He calling you to do?

How would you gauge your faith in this moment? Who are you more like?

Zechariah—filled with questions and doubt

Father of the boy—believing but struggling to fully believe

Mary—all in, full of faith

Explain your choice:

It's easy to believe God can do the impossible—until the impossible work of God involves a personal step of faith from you. But the powerful God who called an ordinary girl to be a part of His extraordinary plan is the same powerful God calling you. He will accomplish it. Don't miss what He's wanting to do in and through you.

**IN YOUR OWN WORDS:** Based on what you've studied today, how would you define faith?

**IN YOUR OWN LIFE:** Based on what you've learned today, what is the next step God is challenging you to take in trusting Him?

## DAY 4 FAITH: MARY, MOTHER OF JESUS

*“Unwavering trust is a rare and precious thing because it often demands a degree of courage that borders on the heroic.”<sup>15</sup>*

**BRENNAN MANNING**

### A MATTER OF TRUST

Why is trust important in a marriage?

Why is trust necessary in a parent/child relationship?

Why is it important for church members and their leaders?

Finish the sentence: If there's one person I can trust implicitly, it would be \_\_\_\_\_.

Put an X where you would place yourself on the scale below:

I trust others easily

I keep my guard up

We may find it hard or easy to trust others, partly depending on our past experiences. Not everyone is trustworthy. But God is. A part of being a faith-filled, legacy-building woman of God is trusting Him implicitly. That means you believe Him not just in the big things but day by day in the small things too. Jesus' mother, Mary, demonstrated this everyday faith just as she showed the mega faith to believe she could conceive the Messiah while still a virgin. This faith showed up when her Son was just starting His ministry. This time, there were no angels or dramatic announcements. It was just another day in Cana, a few miles from Nazareth, at a wedding among friends and neighbors.

### **IMPLICIT TRUST**

Read John 2:1-5. What problem did the bridal couple encounter?

Wedding celebrations in Jesus' day could last up to a week. Families invited the whole town to this extended banquet. It required thoughtful planning to provide enough food and drink for all the guests for the duration of the event. Running out of wine was more than just embarrassing; it violated the strong unwritten social norms of hospitality.<sup>16</sup>

We are not sure how much Mary was responsible for solving the problem, but she saw a way to help. What was her solution?

What do you think Mary expected Jesus to do about the situation?

John described what happened in Cana as Jesus' first miracle (2:11). (Actually John used the word *sign* instead of *miracle*. For John, a sign

was more than just an extraordinary event. It was something that pointed to who Jesus really was.) Mary had not yet seen her Son heal the sick, calm the sea, restore sight to the blind, cast out demons, or raise the dead. Yet she knew Him well enough. Tradition holds that her husband, Joseph, was dead by now. Likely she had come to rely on her adult Son in various situations.<sup>17</sup> One thing is clear: She trusted Him implicitly. She believed that by simply telling Him about the problem, He would care and help.

### How do you explain Jesus' seemingly sharp reply to His mother in verse 4?

Jesus was anything but predictable. When you think you know how He'll respond, He always surprises. He frequently responded to those who asked for help by challenging them and testing their faith. When His mom said in essence, "We need a little help here," Jesus basically shot back, "What do you want me to do? It's not my time yet." We need to understand that Jesus was not being harsh to His mother. But neither was He taking orders from her. His mission was to do the will of the Father. As one scholar put it, "Jesus was not being directed by his mother but by a determined hour."<sup>18</sup>

Mary didn't argue with Jesus. But she didn't back down. She probably didn't understand all the implications of His words, but she understood enough to trust His goodness and ability to solve the problem so completely that she could say to the servants without qualification, "Do whatever he tells you" (v. 5).

### Read how Jesus responded to Mary's absolute trust (2:6-10). What surprises or intrigues you about Jesus' first miracle?

## UNWAVERING TRUST

The Gospel writers recorded over thirty miracles Jesus performed. People were often helped in the process, but there was a higher purpose. Jesus' miracles demonstrated that He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. Again, that's why John called them "signs" instead of "miracles." They displayed His glory to nurture people's faith.<sup>19</sup>

Review verse 11. What significant impact did this miracle have?

Mary herself had already demonstrated her faith in God for the big things when she believed she would give birth as a virgin. She showed faith in Jesus for the everyday things when the wine ran out at a wedding. Trusting God day by day in the big and small things builds an unshakable faith that sustains us in the worst times. So a few years later, when Roman soldiers beat her Son and nailed Him to a cross, Mary had the faith to stay to the end (John 19:25).

In *Trusting God, Even When Life Hurts*, author Jerry Bridges explained it like this:

*"Trust is not a passive state of mind. It is a vigorous act of the soul by which we choose to lay hold on the promises of God and cling to them despite the adversity that at times seeks to overwhelm us."<sup>20</sup>*

When have you trusted God for something big and impossible?

What day-to-day things do you trust God for?

When have you held to an unwavering trust in God despite difficult circumstances?

### **PROVING JESUS OVER AND OVER**

Louisa Stead was with her husband and four-year-old daughter, enjoying the beach on Long Island, when they heard the frantic screams of boy who was drowning. Mr. Stead attempted to save him. But the child pulled him under the waves as well and both drowned in front of Louisa and her daughter.<sup>21</sup>

Widowed and without means of support, Louisa landed in extreme poverty. On one particular morning, she had no money or food to get through the day when she opened her front door to find someone had left food and money there. That was the day she wrote “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus.” The chorus is a testimony to her unwavering trust in Jesus’ constant faithfulness:

*“Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!  
How I’ve proved Him o’er and o’er!  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
Oh, for grace to trust Him more!”<sup>22</sup>*

How has God proven to you that you can trust Him implicitly? How have you experienced His faithfulness in your life?

Would you say you're leaving a legacy of faith? Why or why not? What steps do you need to take to do so?

**IN YOUR OWN WORDS:** Based on what you've studied today, how would you further define faith?

**IN YOUR OWN LIFE:** Based on what you've learned today, what next step is God challenging you to take in believing Him?

## DAY 5 COURAGE & FAITH

*“Courage is contagious. When a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are stiffened.”<sup>23</sup>*

**BILLY GRAHAM**

Who needs the influence of your courage today? Who needs the influence of your faith?

When Corrie ten Boom and her family were arrested by the German authorities and sent to a concentration camp for sheltering Jews in their home in Holland in 1944, she likely never thought of the influence she would have on so many. In those days, when Corrie and her family defied the Nazis to save Jews by providing a safe hiding place, they had no concept of the multitudes they would impact with their legacy of courage. They simply risked their lives to save those being persecuted because they believed it was the right thing for followers of Christ to do.

Corrie and her sister, Betsie, found themselves in the largest concentration camp for women—Ravensbrück—with a diet of watery soup, a lice-infested bed, and drain holes for toilets. They endured deplorable, dehumanizing conditions by holding onto their faith and sharing it with those around them. The sisters strengthened each other’s faith and courage. At one point, Betsie said to Corrie, “[We] must tell people what we have learned here. We must tell them that there is no pit so deep that He is not deeper still. They will listen to us, Corrie, because we have been here.”<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, Corrie saw her sister die at Ravensbrück. She experienced horrors that would drive many people to despair. She struggled with forgiving her captors, yet she never lost her faith in God.

Corrie was freed from the Nazi death camp on December 28, 1944 due to a technical error.<sup>25</sup> Following her release, the Nazis gassed

all women in the camp her age and older. Corrie would spend the remaining forty years of her life traveling the world sharing her story at churches, conferences, and in Bible study groups that met in countries where Christians suffer persecution. She could tell people in the worst circumstances that they could trust in God because she knew what He had brought her through. When she died at the age of ninety-one, she had shared her testimony in sixty countries.<sup>26</sup>

Where do you think Corrie learned her faith and courage?

Undoubtedly, Corrie did not plan the life she ended up living. Nor did she likely begin as a young woman deciding, “I want to build a legacy of courage and faith that will impact hundreds of thousands of people.”

What decisions do you think she made day by day that allowed her to build a legacy of courage that still impacts people like you and me today?

Read the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Daniel 3, and consider their legacy of faith and courage. How did they display faith? How did they display courage?

What was the legacy of their courage and faith?

You may not be currently facing a crisis like the fiery furnace or Ravensbrück, but what can you do today to begin building your courage and faith for when times of testing do come?

Invest more time in daily prayer

Dedicate time to in-depth Bible study

Trust God with my current problem

Work on cultivating friendships with strong believers who will influence me to have faith and courage

Other:

Commit the following Scripture verse to memory to help you leave a legacy of courage and faith.

“Haven’t I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

JOSHUA 1:9