

Reflection Questions: Mary (the mother of Jesus)

We have many pictures of Mary, but I am not sure that “disciple” is a word that most people would associate with Mary initially.

- 1) Have you seen Mary as a disciple of Jesus before? Why or why not?

We often see the faith as a one-time decision. However, there are many times over a person’s life when they can choose faith or choose to walk away. One of my professors in seminary defines discipleship this way:

Feet, pointed toward the heart of God (who is Jesus), over time.¹

Mary (Jesus’ mother) illustrates this wonderful definition. She faced many crossroads in her life of faith. At any time, she could have changed her mind, she could have followed her own different (and probably easier) path. But, at every crossroad, she chose to say “yes” to how Jesus was leading her into a fuller understanding of what it meant to follow the Messiah.

In her story, we saw Mary at the crossroad at the temple, when Jesus was an infant, as she received the prophecy that *“a sword will pierce your own soul too”* (Luke 2: 35). We also saw her when she and Jesus’ brothers came to “take charge of” Jesus (Mark 3:20-21; 31-35; also told in Matthew 12:46-50 and Luke 8:19-21). And we saw Mary at the cross of Jesus (John 19:25-27). While we did not get into these incidents, we could also consider Luke 2:41-52 (when Jesus’ parents lose Jesus and then find him learning in the temple) and John 2:1-11 (when Jesus changes the water into wine at a wedding) as places where Mary’s interactions with her son mean she has to change her understanding of him and allow him to follow his own path rather than the one that she might set for him – a crossroads.

- 2) Which place do you think it was the hardest for Mary to say “yes” to Jesus’ leading rather than following her own understanding?
- 3) Which “crossroad” do you think would be the hardest for you?
- 4) Have you ever encountered “crossroads” in your life of faith? How have you responded?

Some of the stories that we have chosen from Mary’s life do not record what her actual response was. This most likely due to the fact that the Gospels are not stories about Mary but about Jesus. However, Mary is present with the other disciples when they are praying in an upper room, and they receive the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14). And church tradition holds that Mary the mother of Jesus was heavily associated with John (the disciple of

¹ Professor Paddy Ducklow. I don’t know if he got this from somewhere or if it is his own creation.

Jesus) and the church in Ephesus.² All these are indications that she did, in fact, join Jesus' family and become his disciple here on earth. Also, it stands to reason that the Gospel writers, who record stories surrounding Jesus' birth and childhood, heard those stories from Mary.

- 5) What do you think about the fact that Mary is with the other disciples who received the Holy Spirit? Does this change your opinion of her life of faith at all?
- 6) What can you learn about discipleship from Mary?
- 7) Is there anything about Mary's life that resonates with you? Can you apply anything that you know about Mary to your own life?

Putting it together

Choose a bead to represent the story of Mary (the mother of Jesus). What about this bead represents Mary's story for you?

² Darrell W. Johnson. *Discipleship on the Edge: An Expository Journey through the Book of Revelation*. (Vancouver: Regent College, 2004), 54.