

Monday, May 11, 2009

Yesterday was Mother's day. In the days following that first Easter, I wonder how much attention Mary, Jesus' mother, received? How did she handle the reality of what had happened during that Passover . . . the brutality toward her son, His death and burial, His resurrection? This week, let's dig deeply into what we know of this remarkable woman, to learn some important lessons regarding how God wants us to 'steward' motherhood in our day. By that I mean, "motherhood" is a miracle of God, and it is absolutely essential to the existence of the human race, thus what is God expecting we, humanity, do to care for "motherhood" responsibly?

Consider Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:13-16. What do you conclude about God's knowledge of the unborn, and His direct involvement in their development in the womb moment by moment? Do you even see God already had a plan and purpose for YOUR life while you were yet a "fetus"?

Consider Isaiah 43:7; 44:2; 46:3, 4; 49:15. What do you learn about how much God delights in the fact that He created you? Do you agree NO human being exists without God's desire and apart from God's design . . . and may I add, for His delight!

We first encounter Mary, Jesus' mother, in Luke 1:27, startled by the visit of an angel who calls her "blessed". I urge you to consider EVERY woman who experiences conception is "blessed", for she and God engage in the ultimate human miracle. Mary's confusion, of course, was how it would be possible since she was a virgin. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you", was the angel's reply (Luke 1:35). For Mary, her miracle was that the Holy Spirit placed a sperm in her womb without any participation by a man, and then the Holy Spirit guided that sperm to connect with one of Mary's eggs and Holy Spirit managed conception took place! You exist because a man (your human father) and a woman (your human mother) participated in a similar miracle experience, each contributing a sperm and egg . . . but your conception, as with Jesus, required the Holy Spirit uniting them! No conception happens without God's direct involvement. In that way every mother's pregnancy is similar to Mary's . . . a God miracle!! Are you awed by that truth?

Tuesday, May 12, 2009

In recent years medical science has developed quite a serious "pre-natal" process of watching the development of a pregnancy very carefully. Mary, Jesus' mother, was pregnant at a time in history when most of what we know and practice today was unavailable. Men . . . notice please how important our role is in "stewardship" of a pregnant woman, especially the one who is pregnant by a relationship with us! Read carefully Matthew 1:18-26, what do you conclude about God's expectation of Joseph, even though the child conceived in Mary's womb was not his? Do you see how important it was to God that Joseph understand the awesome miracle of Mary's pregnancy / the role that this baby would have in human history and Joseph's role in both Mary and the baby's life?

Remember, in those days in the Jewish community, an engaged man who found his fiancé "unfaithful" (pregnant) was permitted to "put her away" (break the engagement). Abortion was never an option for God's people, thus the woman would be expected to carry the baby to full term and raise the child as a single parent, probably under her father's roof. She, her family and her child would live in shame. Or, since adultery was punishable by death (Deut. 22:20-25), depending on the situation, it was possible the "promiscuous" woman would be stoned to death. Do you see why Joseph's action to "take her home as his wife" was remarkable? Men, do you see Joseph fulfilled our primary role in our marriage . . . to protect our wives, from anything or anyone who might harm them . . . emotional, physical or spiritual harm. We are designed by God to be their warrior protectors, providing them at all times, in all situations, the comfort of being content and safe in every way.

Notice also, "but he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son." (Matt. 1:26) That, my brothers, is "stewarding" a woman's integrity. She was his wife, they had every legal right to intimacy . . . but Joseph would do nothing to disrupt what God was doing in Mary's womb . . . that's profound respect, honoring God's miracle work in her! Learn it well brothers, apply it to every aspect of your relationship with your wife! Protect her, honor her, respect God's work in her . . . at all times!

Wednesday, May 13, 2009

Walk around Calvary Church some Saturday evening, Sunday morning or Wednesday evening . . . but watch out for the little ones . . . seems like there are hundreds of them, doesn't it? Now watch the young moms. Where do they learn how to do what God has designed for their unique motherhood role with their children? Notice what Mary did . . . Luke 1:39-56. She spent three months with "old Elizabeth" who also was living a miracle (Luke 1:5-25, 57-66). Why? May I suggest . . . no else in the world could understand about the angel's visit, the miracle conception. Only Elizabeth and Zechariah could help her prepare for being Jesus' mother! So, if you are a young mom, who helped or is helping you through this journey so you experience God's miracle to the fullest? If you're an older woman, how many young moms have you "mentored" through the experience?

What if we started a new "pre-natal culture" at Calvary . . . every pregnant woman has at least one "Elizabeth" in her life, walking the miracle journey with her?? Let's not worry about developing a "program" . . . just do it! Mature moms, you understand better than anyone what to look for, what the signs of pregnancy are . . . and when you see it, go ahead, step forward and offer yourself as "Elizabeth" to her, then walk the journey as a spiritual/emotional mentor, enjoying what Mary and Elizabeth experienced . . . hours of conversation and prayer celebrating the miracle and preparing for what only an experienced Mom can know is ahead for a pregnant mom.

Men, read Luke 2:1-40. Do you see Joseph's role in leading and caring for his dear Mary through her last phase of pregnancy, the birth and the delicate first weeks of her mothering a helpless infant? Men, it appears Joseph didn't have the help of a mentor as Mary did! Brothers, can those of us who have already walked this path step forward, alongside young dads and walk the journey with them, just as "Elizabeths" are walking with their young wives? Remember the lessons you learned about lovingly helping your wife through her pregnancy . . . back rubs, house chores, cravings, lots of prayer . . . how did you honor her and thank God for your pregnancy miracle? A Calvary "pre-natal culture"! Why not?

Thursday, May 14, 2009

Have you ever considered the spiritual battle raging for the lives of unborn, newborns and even their mothers in our society today? Look closely at Matthew 2, Satan was determined to kill baby Jesus, or at least so discourage young Mary and Joseph, that they'd give up on the miracle God was asking them to "steward" . . . the incarnation of God!

Soldiers killing babies in Bethlehem, the midnight escape and long walk to Egypt. Life as a Jewish refugee in Egypt with a baby to care for must have been very difficult! Eventual return to Israel, but unfortunately to Nazareth, Mary's hometown, where they would undoubtedly live with continual ridicule and shame, perceived to have an illegitimate son. Men, look closely . . . what do you see in Joseph through all this? A man alert to God and God's guidance of him? A man determined to lovingly care for his young bride and the child he knew he had not fathered? A man willing to put his life and personal reputation on the line . . . everyday? A hard working man determined to provide whatever they would need for living? And who do you see helping Joseph . . . no one but God!

Brothers and entire church, watch this closely! Satan is determined to destroy the life of every child born among us. In our day, the evil kingdom's most prevalent attack scheme is destroying the love relationship between young mom and young dad . . . selfishness, fighting, infidelity, pursuit of accomplishment or accumulation of things . . . so the child is set aside to be entertained by TV all day, or left in the care of others while mom and dad both work or pursue their personal desires, and the family disintegrates. Do you see it? We can't stand by and let it happen. Joseph and Mary were forged together in a God union and their determination to fulfill their role as parents to Jesus would not allow anything to tear them apart from each other or from Him! Luke 2:41-52 is the last glimpse we have of the three of them. Notice how Ephesians 6:1-4 fits this picture of them? Is that your family too? We never hear of Joseph again after that Jerusalem experience. Mark 6 tells us Mary had other children. Does that mean Mary raised them as a single mom? Did Joseph die? We don't know . . . but God sustained Mary!

Friday, May 15, 2009

Have you considered the relationship between adult Jesus and His earthly mother Mary? John 2 is our first glimpse . . . a wedding feast. Mary is a special guest, they run out of wine, Jesus is invited to help. Read it, what do you see? Notice they go down to Capernaum after the wedding "for a few days". Who did they stay with? Capernaum became Jesus' base of operations in His adult months of ministry in the Galilee area. Peter and Andrew and Peter's wife were evidently from there (Mark 1:29,30).

Sadly, Jesus was "run out of town" from His own hometown, when He identified Himself (Luke 4:14-30) as the one Isaiah spoke about in his prophecy. Assuming Joseph was no longer living, how did this affect Mary? We have few glimpses of Jesus and Mary over the next months, but we can assume she kept close track of what God was doing with her miracle Son, and I believe it's safe to assume Jesus kept frequent contact with her, making sure she was well cared for.

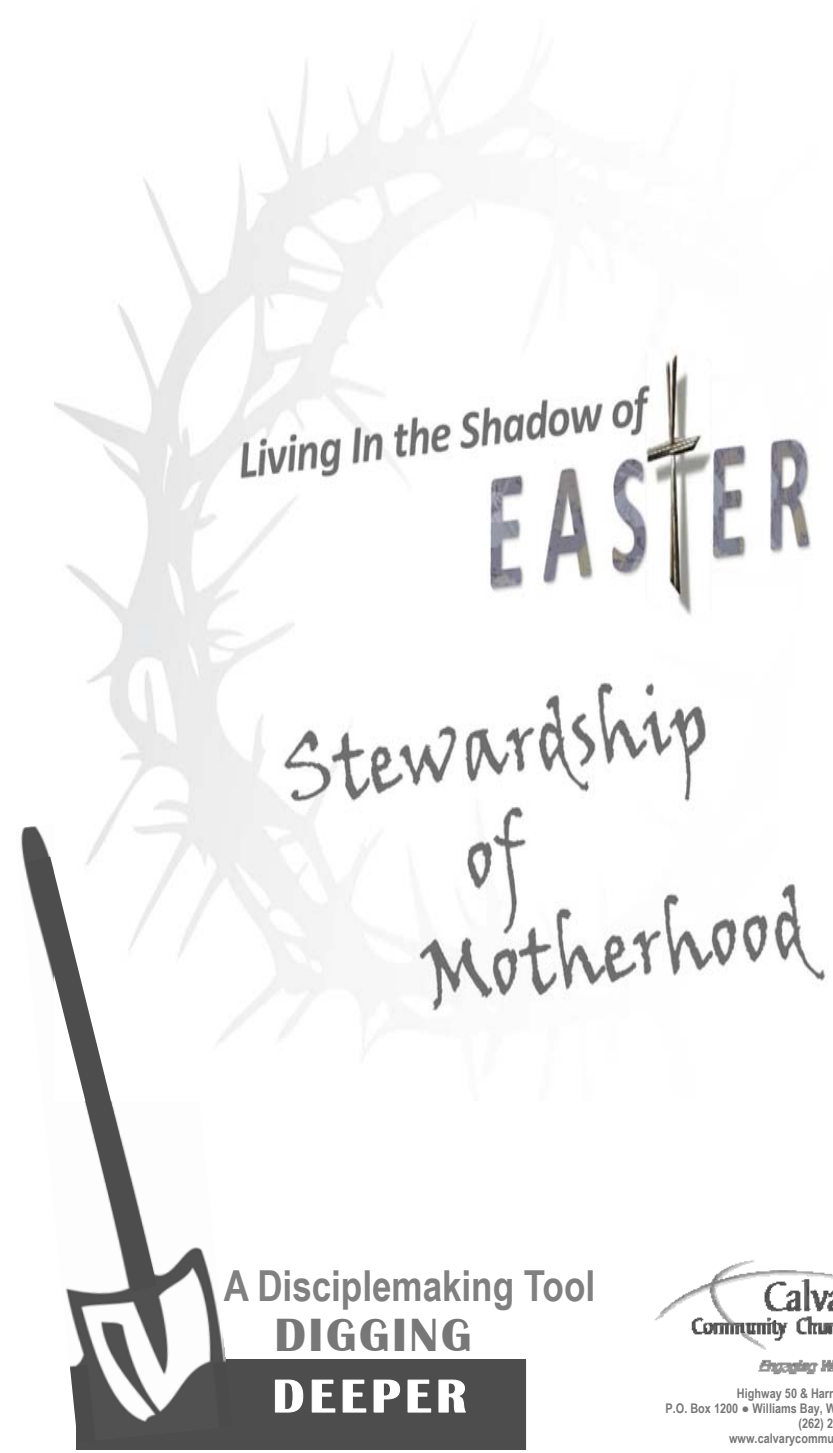
Was Mary part of the group which made the final trek to Jerusalem with Jesus for that final Passover? Was she at Mary, Martha and Lazarus' home for dinner that night (John 12)? Did she remain at their home much of that Passover week? Was she in the upper room that night with Jesus and His disciples as they had their last meal together (John 13-17)?

We know she was at the cross when Jesus was dying (John 19:25-27), and there Jesus demonstrated a powerful example for us men in caring for our ageing mothers! Also, a powerful example of us helping the widows or ageing mothers of our friends who may be unable to help them. We don't know how Mary spent that dark Saturday, or when she first saw her Son risen from the dead. But we know she was likely present when He finally ascended back to heaven, and gathered with his friends after they returned from that experience (Acts 1:0-14). Can you imagine how Mary Magdalene, Jesus' disciples and especially John took great care in "stewarding" the privilege of caring for her the rest of Mary's life? How are we caring for our dear older widows? What a remarkable privilege! What is God saying to you about the "Marys" among us?



Pastor Doug Anderson

May 11 – May 15, 2009



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