

LEAD OFF

Have you ever been asked to do something crazy or weird by someone else... maybe a boss?

Some really strange things have been requested of people, for example:

1. "My boss asked me to write an email apologizing for not smiling enough. I had to send it to her and all of upper management, who didn't even know my name, let alone that I didn't smile enough for some people. I now hate myself for doing it."
2. "Once my boss was on a business trip to San Francisco. She called me from the hotel room and told me to call the front desk to order her breakfast from room service."
3. "Asked me to Photoshop out the watermark on the free samples of his daughter's high-school graduation photos."
4. "My previous boss decided once for a team bonding experience we should design, print, laminate & then cut out invites, menu's & party bits for some huge family BBQ he was having, which none of us were actually invited to."
5. "Worked as a projectionist at a movie theatre. One day my boss had me carry several very large boxes of theatre supplies and equipment to his truck. There was a new theatre in town owned by the same company, and he said he was taking supplies over. He acknowledged that loading trucks wasn't a part of our job description and that he's be paying us time and a ½. We left, and we never saw him again. But being interviewed by the cops as a part of a robbery investigation was fun."
6. "He asked me to go to the pharmacy and pick up his solution for his colonoscopy. I had to get instructions from the doctor on how to apply and take notes. Thankfully, that was the end of what I was asked to do."
7. "She asked me to complete her daughter's school project. She was a junior in college."
8. "My boss couldn't figure out how to use an online application that he was submitting for another job. So he literally had me fill out an application for him for another company. I made him look really good."

So there are some pretty weird things that people have been asked to do. How about this one...

You're a junior-high aged girl, probably 14 years old and you're engaged to your beloved fiancée Joseph. You live in a small town called Nazareth, at that time maybe dozens or a few hundred people live there. You're in most likelihood illiterate and you come from a poor working class family. You're preparing for your wedding which depending on what you got engaged would likely being in a year.

- Then an angel shows up... not just any angel, but an archangel and tells you that you will be become pregnant despite the fact that you are a virgin and you're going to be God's mom.

And then Mary says... wake me up from this nightmare... I think I ate too many burritos at Mexican Villa!

- There is no way that this is real.
- But it was. It was very real. It was Truth.

BIGGEST JOB EVER

This is single handedly the biggest job that's ever been given to anyone.

- There is no larger responsibility in the history of the universe than to raise a child who was somehow 100% God and a 100% human at the same time.
- How do you even begin to wrap your mind around the task at hand? At the age of 14 no less?!

Luke 1:26-38 NIV

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, 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 conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him 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 Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

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

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on 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 unable to conceive is in her sixth month. 37 For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

After this happened Mary went to stay with her relatives Zechariah and Elizabeth for a few months.

Let's hear from Mary herself.

PLAY VIDEO

WHAT GOT MARY THROUGH THIS?

What got Mary through this?

- Some would just give a broad answer of God.
 - While I absolutely believe that is true... it's not quite that simple.

Mary had plenty of reasons to be terrified. Mary had plenty of reasons why she should have worried herself into health issues, fatigue, tension, anxiety, depression, hives, high blood pressure, disease, and an early grave.

- Some of you know all too well what worrying is because that's what your spiritual gift is.

- Let's see, where do we begin:
 - Health
 - Finances
 - Relationships
 - Children
 - Future
 - Security
 - Job
- There is plenty to worry about.
- That's where Mary is at.

MARY'S WORRIES

Let's take an inventory on all she has to be worried about:

She sped out of town and took a 100 mile hike to find Zechariah and Elizabeth to stay with them for a few months. She had no idea what she would return to.

1. First of all she's pregnant, and Joseph knows he wasn't the cause of that.
 - a. Will he even want to stay around?
 - b. Will the love of her life walk out on her and make her a single mother?
 - c. How will he ever believe that it wasn't the mail man?
 - i. "No, Joseph I promise... God showed up to me in a dream and it's a miracle... I'm pregnant with the Messiah."
 1. Sure Mary. I give you creative points, but aint flying for me.
2. What is going to be her reputation when she gets back?
 - a. Showing up pregnant out of wedlock would have been disastrous.
 - b. We aren't talking town gossip... they may have beaten her and stoned her.
 - c. They would have mocked her for saying that God was responsible for making her pregnant... I mean think about it.
 - i. None of us in this room would have stoned her, but we would have at least laughed at her for saying something like "The Holy Spirit generated a miracle by which I conceived without sex."
 - ii. Right...
 1. Story of crazy FB post. **(SHOW IMAGE)**
3. In addition to that... she's now pregnant.
 - a. I've never been pregnant, despite my appearance... but I've heard it can be a bear.
 - b. She's in a small town without great medical care, plus you're poor.
 - c. It's dangerous... a lot of women died from childbirth back then because their bodies weren't ready to go through that.
4. What about her family?
 - a. Sometimes family is more ruthless than the strangers in town square.
 - b. Would they reject her... push her out?
 - c. Or would they believe that God is using her?
5. Not to mention... she's a first-time mother
 - a. What a way to start... Here's God... good luck.

The weight of this responsibility is crushing.

- If most of us in this room were honest, we couldn't handle that type of stress.
- We would fold like a cheap pack of Shasta Cola or Dr Thunder.
- You'd find me in the corner, rocking back and forth, and singing country music to myself.
 - I would have done lost it.

And you know what... I bet Mary would have lost it too...

- Because even though she's one of the most amazing humans ever, she's still human.
- I bet Mary would have lost it too... except she does one thing that is critical.
- She does one thing that is a lesson for all of us to learn from.
- She does the one thing that ensures she will survive the most challenge of all tests.

She turns her worry into an opportunity to worship.

MARY WORSHIPS

After Mary sees Elizabeth and they exchange an exciting moment of celebration together, Mary breaks out in a song of worship...

Luke 1:46-49 NIV

And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

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.

So, this would have been like what we do here.

- Sometimes my wife gets ready in the morning and plays and sings worship music.
- This is basically Mary doing the same thing.

Mary chooses to worship.

Last week we talked about how different people respond to God differently.

- Some respond with hostility, some with indifference, and some with worship.
- The Magi responded in worship, just like Mary responded in worship.
- There is an underlying theme here amongst those who are followers of Jesus... they respond to God and to God's presence in their life in worship.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

We all worship... it was what we were made to do.

- We constantly worship something.
- You either posture your life to worship God, or you worship other people and/or things.
 - This is called idolatry.
 - Many people think idolatry is an old-fashioned sin... but it's likely wrapped up in about every sin that we commit today.
 - It's the elevation of something in our lives above the priority of God..
 - We worship people
 - You may say... we'll I don't bow before someone or go to a worship service and sing songs with their name in it...
 - No, but you can easily love someone more than you love God, when you prioritize them over God.
 - That's idolatry.
 - With family? Yes.
 - Scripture says if you don't love God more than your family, you aren't fit for him.
 - We worship things.
 - Possessions, food, money, knowledge
 - When we worship possessions, that's when we aren't good stewards with our finances, we over spend, or we restrict our ability to give, because we spend.
 - When we worship food, we allow food to control our bodies and behaviors, more than having control over it.
 - When we worship money, whether we are rich or poor, we are never content and we never have enough.
 - When we worship knowledge, we elevate ourselves and others that have it.
 - When we worship things we live for them, we get our meaning from them, our value, our security, our significance. Our life is wrapped up in these idols.
 - It's all in vein because idols always disappoint, unlike God they're not perfect, they're not selfless, they're not loving, they're not good, and they don't endure forever.

There is a lot of danger in any worship that isn't directed at God.

- Heck the first two commandments address this:
 - 1. Thou shalt not have no other gods before me
 - 2. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image
- In the New Testament he said the greatest commandment of all is to..
 - Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
 - If you are loving God with all, there is no room to elevate anything in our lives anywhere close to his status.

Mary responds in worship... what she does is elevate God above her worry and concern. Her security and trust doesn't come from her situation or resources... it comes from God, and she recognizes that.

- True worship in the middle of a dark situation will always shine the light of God through anything you're going through.

BECAUSE SHE WORSHIPS, SHE RESPONDS IN OBEDIENCE

Because Mary was able to change her worry into worship, she was able to follow through in obedience to what God had asked of her to do, and she gave birth to the Son of God.

Luke 2:6-7 NIV

6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

NOT THE END OF HER JOURNEY

The reality was is that her journey as the mother of God was just beginning.

- She had other children... can you imagine raising other children with a literally perfect child.
 - How can you not play favorites when one of your children is God?
 - "Oh there goes Jesus... he just walks on water around here."
 - "We are out of bread, I guess we could run to the store, or.... Hey Jesus come here."

Not only that, but she knew his destiny. She knew he was going to die a brutal death for the sins of all mankind.

- It's like knowing the plot line of the movie... and that it ends with your child getting rejected and betrayed and murdered, and you have to spend your whole life slowly watching this plot line unfold, and there is nothing you can do about it.
- Even though Jesus is the Messiah... he's still her baby boy.
- I couldn't even imagine if that was the destiny of my son.

Then she endures watching him get rejected, humiliated, and crucified on the cross as she was at his side the whole time.

- She endures all of the slander and all of the name calling.
- She endures watching every ounce of blood drip from his body.
- She endures the grueling three days as her baby boy lay in the grave.

But what joy she must have experienced when she saw her baby boy back from the grave!

- What joy she must have experienced when she saw the resurrection of the One True God play out before her eyes.
- What relief she must have felt that she choose to be obedient to what God wanted her to do.

YOU

You see there are some that can relate to Mary, and some that can't.

- Some have felt a stirring in their heart to respond to something God wanted them to do and they've embraced and engaged in that calling and other's don't understand.

The reality is that some of us don't even get to the stage of worry in our life, because we left so many dreams and possibilities untapped because we weren't willing to listen to the angel's crazy request to start with.

- Maybe we felt God asking us to do something that would be challenging...
 - Maybe we told the angel... no thank you... that will cost me too much, that's too scary, that's too risky.
 - Maybe we thought to herself, nah, I'm doing just fine.
 - I got my own life going on.
 - I'm getting married in a few months.
 - We have dreams of our own.
 - Don't disrupt my own plans. Don't disrupt where I am at, and everything I've planned for my life.

I think some of you God is showing up in your life and trying to do something special.

- And you never got to the worry stage, because you never even accepted and engaged with what God wanted you to do to begin with.

Look at what Mary's act of obedience did.

You never know how God can use you too.

- We've learned... he can use anybody. Even cast-offs.
- We've learned that God likes to use people you never would have thought... like Peter and the wisemen.

What's God challenging you to do right now in your life?

God has been speaking a common thread in our services these last few weeks.

- God can use anybody
- He wants to use you
- I get the sense that he's wanting to push some of you out of your comfort zones or out of your nest.