

Women in the Bible Mary, Mother of Jesus

Interpreting the Text:

1. Compare and contrast the ways Matthew and Luke introduce Mary. Consider also the omission of Mary in Mark and John. Why is she important for the way Luke chooses to tell Jesus' story? How does Matthew see Mary?
2. For several decades, interpreters have debated whether Mary consented to carry Jesus or if she had no choice. What is Mary's demeanor when talking to the angel Gabriel in Luke 1:26-38? Does she consent, or has she been conscripted into service?
3. How does Mary's "Magnificat" in Luke 1:46-55 foreshadow themes that will be prevalent throughout Luke's gospel? What is significant about these prophetic claims coming from a woman?

Applying the Text:

1. How, if at all, does the Bechdel Test help you see the interaction between Elizabeth and Mary in a new light? Try this approach with other women as you continue this course.
2. What does Mary's answer to the angel in Luke 1:26-38 teach us about faith? Should we try to follow her model, or is her story too fantastic to imitate?
3. How important to your faith is Mary's virginity, either at the time of Jesus' birth or in the remainder of her life? Why should we emphasize this piece of doctrine – or ignore it?
4. Research one of the visual traditions depicting Mary (e.g. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Lady of Fatima, Hodigitria, etc). Why do you think her image has had such cultural staying power?