



The Real Mary: The Discussion Guide for Groups

Chapter 1 Why a Book about the Real Mary?

- What do you think about Mary? And, how did you acquire this view?
- Why do you think most Protestants have ignored or downplayed Mary? Are you seeing a renewed interest in Mary among Protestants?
- Do you see the impact of a false view of Mary – what Nora O. Lozana-Diaz calls *mariasnismo* – on the Church? on those whom you know? or on you?

Chapter 2 “May it be” Woman of Faith

Scripture reference: Luke 1:26-38

- How do you explain the willingness of Mary to consent to God’s plan? Why is her willingness surprising?
- Discuss the Old Testament legislation from Deuteronomy 22:23-24 (cited in text), as well as Numbers 5 and the “bitter waters,” and the development of that legislation in Judaism at the time of Mary. How is pre-marital pregnancy treated in your community and church?
- Discuss the implications of Mary’s status as a suspected adulteress and the impact this would have had for Joseph and Jesus.

Chapter 3 “He has brought down rulers” Woman of Justice

Scripture reference: Luke 1:39-56

- Discuss the tendency we have to “spiritualize” the Magnificat, as well as the social and political realities of the Magnificat. Besides “We shall overcome,” can you think of other songs or slogans that function as the Magnificat did for Mary?
- In chapter 3 and in the light of Appendix 1, discuss Mary’s awareness of the promises of God and the expectations that Israel held for the coming of God’s kingdom.
- Mary asserts that all generations would call her “blessed.” What do you think that means? Is it scriptural to bless Mary or to call her “blessed” today??

Chapter 4 “And pondered them in her heart” Woman of Danger

Scripture reference: Luke 2:1-20

- Discuss this statement: “nice girls don’t change the world.” If possible, have someone read Lynne Hybels’ book, *Nice Girls Don’t Change the World*, to present some of her ideas in light of *The Real Mary*.
- How was Mary “dangerous”? Is the redemptive work of God in this world always dangerous?
- How did the revelation of names for Jesus give Mary something to ponder? And how did the names for Jesus give Mary understanding of God’s plan through her son?

Chapter 5 “Where is the one who has been born king?” Woman of Witness

Scripture reference: Matthew 2: 1-12

- Discuss what Mary “witnessed,” the events and themes, as well as what these would have meant to Mary.
- How do you explain what Mary witnessed when she encountered the magi?
- How do you explain what Mary witnessed when she heard the report of the star?

Chapter 6 “A sword will pierce your own soul” Woman of Sorrow

Scripture reference: Luke 2:21-38

- When Jews who followed the Torah had a firstborn son, what were the various spiritual intentions and rites they were to follow?
- Explore and discuss the two-fold message of Simeon.
- What do you think is the “sword” that Simeon referred to? How did Simeon’s message impact Mary’s understanding of God’s plan?

Chapter 7 “In my Father’s house” Woman of Wonder

Scripture reference: Luke 2:41-52

- Discuss the significance of Passover for Jewish hopes for liberation.
- Explore the significance of Mary’s encounter with Jesus at the Temple when he was twelve. How would this make you feel as a parent?
- What was revealed in Jesus’ words about his Father’s house regarding Jesus’ future ministry?

Chapter 8 “Do whatever he tells you” Woman of Surrender

Scripture reference: John 2:1-11

- Do you think Jesus’ remark to his mother at the wedding at Cana was rude? How do his words relate to the “honor” culture of the Jewish world?
- Discuss Mary’s response to the servants, “Do whatever he says.”
- What do you think Jesus revealed of himself and his divine nature by turning the water into wine? Explore how this revelation might have affected Mary.

Chapter 9 “Who are my mother and my brother?” Woman of Ambivalence

Scripture reference: Mark 3:20-21, 31-35

- Why were so many ambivalent about Jesus during his public ministry?
- What did Mary and the average Torah-believing Jew believe would happen when the Messiah came? How did Jesus’ behavior and ministry relate to those expectations?
- Discuss why Mary wanted to rescue Jesus at the house in Capernaum. Now explore Jesus’ response. What was Jesus trying to tell Mary and his siblings about his mission when speaking of this “true” family?

Chapter 10 “Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother” Woman of Faithfulness

Scripture reference: John 19: 25-27

- Discuss why Mary stayed near the cross when Jesus was crucified. How do you think she responded to her son’s crucifixion?
- Why did Jesus commission John to care for his mother? Why did he not commission her to his own siblings?

Chapter 11 “Along with the women and Mary, mother of Jesus” Woman of Influence

Scripture reference: Luke 1:46-55; Matthew 5:3-12; James 1:26-27; Mark 6:3

- Discuss Mary’s influence on Jesus as a child and as an adult. Also, explore Mary’s influence on James. Are these similar in any way?
- What role do you think Mary played in the earliest church in Jerusalem?

Chapter 12 Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Mary: Woman of Controversy 1

Scripture reference: Revelation 12

- How are these categories used in the Roman Catholic Church for understanding the ongoing development of Mary: woman of Revelation 12, woman of sinlessness, mother of God, and woman of perpetual virginity.
- Which categories do you think are appropriate? Why?

Chapter 13 Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Mary: Woman of Controversy 2

Scripture reference: Matthew 1:18-25

- Discuss each role or category as the Roman Catholic Church presents for Mary: immaculate conception, glorious assumption, mediatrix, and devotion to Mary.
- Which categories do you think are appropriate? Why?
- How do we decide what is appropriate for what we believe about Mary?

Chapter 14 “All generations will call me blessed” Woman to Remember

Scripture reference: Luke 1:46-55

- What can we do today to represent Mary fully and respectfully in Protestant theology? That is, how can we see the Real Mary?
- Discuss how honoring Mary might draw us closer to her Son.
- How is Mary’s life an example for us today?