

Wonder Women! Then and Now

Based on Luke Ch 1 & 2 and especially Luke Ch 1 v 46-56

What is your family structure? You may be an only child or you may have several brothers and sisters. You may have children and grandchildren or perhaps you are close to your nephews and nieces. Aunts and uncles may play a part in your life (or the memory of them!) or wonderful friends may have taken the place of your family. We are all different. My only sister died when she was 11 years old and I was 14, but I had strong, loving parents and from my teens onward I was brought up as an only child. In adult life many of my cousins have become like sisters and, although we are all very different, we support each other as a close family unit.

Our Christmas story begins with two cousins meeting together – Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist and Mary, the mother of Jesus. Elizabeth became a special support and source of encouragement to Mary. They were both chosen by God, to be mothers of extraordinary babies and as such, faced both excitement and wonder during their pregnancies. Following the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah and then to Mary both women shared their excitement. They were women of great faith and shared a deep belief in the fact that what God had said would actually happen. One was an unmarried young girl and one a woman who had been married for many years, but they both believed that, as we read in Luke Chapter 1 v 37, 'There is nothing that God cannot do.' Elizabeth and Zachariah were 'righteous' and 'blameless' people and from the Levitical family of Aaron so in one sense they had already been chosen to be parents of the special child, John, who would become the greatest prophet and prepare the way for Jesus Christ. God knew that Elizabeth and her husband would meet the challenges of bringing up their special son, that they would teach him the scriptures and prepare him well for his future work.

God knew also the qualities possessed by Mary, young as she was, and by Joseph her husband to be. The Magnificat, Mary's song of Praise, shows how she reacted to Gabriel's visit. (Luke Ch 1 v 46-56) Luke records that Mary stayed with Elizabeth almost until John was born. They shared their thoughts and made their preparations together. Although we know that the birth of Jesus was not the almost dream-like presentation that we see our children perform year by year throughout the country in school and church productions, it does, however, show Mary's obedience, her strength of character, her faith and her trust in God. I'm sure she must have felt awe and bewilderment as the happenings of that special night unravelled. We know also that 'Mary remembered all these things and thought deeply about them.' There was more to Mary and Joseph than just any young couple expecting their first child, all be it before they were married. They were brave to stand firm against traditions of the day. They were committed to each other and to their commitment to God. Zachariah and Elizabeth and Mary and Joseph were special parents. Elizabeth and Mary enjoyed a wonderful relationship as cousins. Wonder women indeed!!

For Discussion

1. How would you have felt if you were Elizabeth?
2. How would you have felt if you were Mary?
3. Some people feel that family doesn't matter anymore. Is family structure important to you? Discuss!