

## Mary, Mother of Jesus

I would like to begin this lesson with a reading in the Bible. Luke 1:46-55. The reading is called "The Song of Mary" or "The Magnificat." It is the answer Mary gave when the Angel Gabriel spoke to Mary about her pregnancy.

The story of Mary, that we know, begins when Gabriel appears to Mary at Nazareth and then she goes to see her cousin Elisabeth who soon will be the mother of John the Baptist. We celebrate the Christmas story with Mary and the birth of Jesus. Mary is often seen with Jesus during his ministry and is with him at his Crucifixion.

Mary is an amazing character in the Bible and other religious writings. Mary is the only woman to have her own chapter in the Koran. She is often the only woman's likeness on Christian church paintings and is found depicted in stain glass windows in the largest cathedrals in the world. Mary is a very humble mother from very small village in the Middle East and she becomes known as "Mother Most Blessed."

I think she is a perfect beginning to learning about women in the Bible. I know the previous subjects you studied were the Prophets who were men. The Bible has a rich tradition of stories about women and Mary gives us a glimpse into what it was like to be a woman during the time of Jesus.

I would like to study the story of Mary for two weeks. One week we will look at Mary as a young woman before Jesus is born and next week we will look at the life of Mary after Jesus is born. So this week your assignment will be to think about women in your life. Teachers, relatives and leaders who influence your life and you listen to when they talk or somebody you admire by their actions. What words do they use? Remember the words Mary used in her prayer-are the words similar or different? (Mary uses the words: "magnifies the Lord," "blessed," "spirit rejoicing," and other phrases connecting with God.) What actions do you admire in the women in your life? What are actions you question or just plain don't like? Mary has been a role model for centuries. Who would you consider a role model today? And why?