

**Lesson Title:** Failed Expectations - Mary

**Key Concept:** The Bible is filled with people for whom God did not do what they expected. Mary of Nazareth is a prime example of blessing turning into problems.

**Scriptures:**

Gabriel appeared to her and said, "Greetings, **favored woman!** The Lord is with you!"  
(Luke 1:28 *New Living Translation*)

Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has **blessed** you above all women, and your child is blessed."  
(Luke 1:42 *New Living Translation*)

**Context Scriptures:** Matthew 1:18–24; Luke 2:34, 42–50; Matthew 12:47–50; Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21; John 8:41; Hebrews 11:35–38

**Lesson Thoughts:**

Normally when we hear the terms *favored* or *blessed*, our thoughts go to happiness and prosperity.

There is a jarring disconnect between our concept of statements made to Mary and their actual fulfillment in her life. Early in the story Mary is repeatedly called *favored* and *blessed*. The rest of her life seems to be anything but that. We would not consider it a blessing that she was doubted and almost rejected by her fiancé (Matthew 1:18–19); her virtue and veracity were questioned for the rest of her life. She frantically sought her son for three days, only to be rebuked by him for her lack of understanding (Luke 2:41–50). Instead of being exalted to a place of honor and prominence, she was equated with strangers whose only relationship was that they believed Jesus' teachings (Matthew 12:46). The reputation that followed her from her youth was the proximate cause of a charge flung by Jesus' enemies, "We aren't illegitimate children!" implying that he was (John 8:41). Then

*newark united pentecostal church*

at last she had to witness his humiliating death in probably the most painful and degrading way ever devised by humanity.

To be blessed by being used in the plan of God may not translate into happiness and the approval of the community. As with many of the nameless “others” of Hebrews 11:35–38, Mary faced a life of unrelenting problems. Daily whispers at the well—akin to those likely suffered by the woman at the well in John 4—questions and rollercoaster emotions as Jesus’ ministry unfolded, and the unmitigated horror of the crucifixion were part and parcel of her being *blessed*. If this is the lot of the *favored*, then it may seem better to be overlooked by God.

Those who only expect an easy time and a smooth road as a consequence of the “blessings of God” on their lives are likely to be disappointed. Developing a wrong attitude in the midst of God’s *favor* is a real danger. Checking out the backstory of everyone in Hebrews 11 can offer a proper perspective.

Then came the justification of the resurrection. The wagging tongues now lay as silent as Jesus had been those three days. Then she who had carried God made flesh within her, now had that same God as the Holy Spirit within her. At last, all the world could know she was indeed *favored* and *blessed*.

**Discussion Questions:**

- 1) Share a time in your life when you were blessed (used) by God, and yet unhappy?
- 2) Relate a time when it looked like someone was out of favor with God, but they came through it with a powerful testimony.
- 3) How does this saying relate to these lessons? “You can see farther on the mountain top, but the valley is where the crops grow.”

**Notes and Reflections**

- 1) Read Hebrews 11 with an eye to the problems faced by God's chosen because of his blessings.
- 2) Notice the difference in the "success" and attitudes of Jonah and Jeremiah.
- 3) Make a list (it can be kept private) of at least ten times when the blessing of God in your life has been accompanied by troubles. Also note the benefit added to your walk by these situations.