

"Lucidly done and without any dumbing down, these stories pull off the difficult trick of being time-honouring and contemporary." Andrew Motion, Poet Laureate 1999–2009



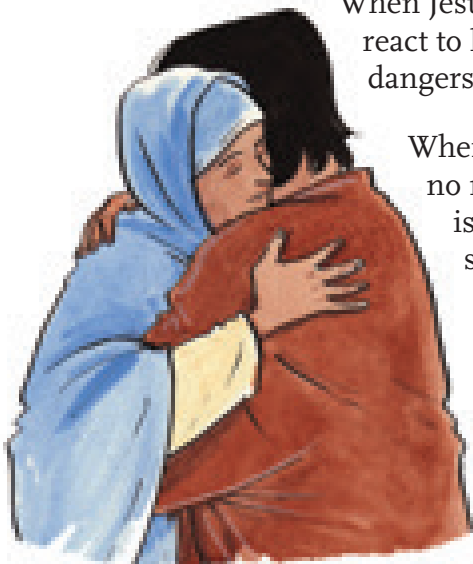
MARY OF GALILEE

Can you spare the time to listen to my account?
I should like to tell the whole story, just once before I die.

Mary is a young woman living a simple life in Nazareth, when an angel's visit changes her life forever. She has been chosen by God to bear him a son. She alone amongst women has been chosen to bear the agony and the joy.

From the moment of his birth, she knows that Jesus's life will be like no other: she has been warned of the pain that lies ahead.

When Jesus begins his work, how will she react to her increasing awareness of the dangers facing her son?



When Mary experiences anguish that no mother should ever experience, is her faith strong enough to sustain her? Might there be grounds for joy in the midst of such brutality?

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THE CHARACTERS



Mary

God has chosen Mary to be the mother of his son. What will this mean for her?



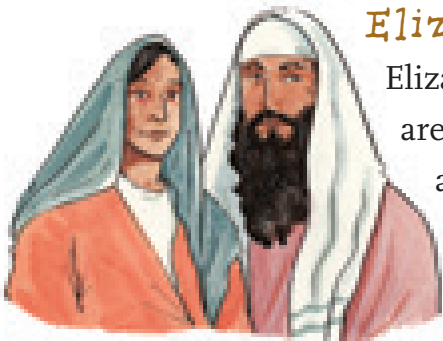
Joseph

Engaged to Mary, Joseph too has responsibility for the young Jesus.

What can he teach him?

Elizabeth and Zechariah

Elizabeth and Zechariah think they are too old to have children, until an angel visits Zechariah. Who will their son become?



Jesus

Jesus is the Son of God, but he is also Mary's son. How will the events of his life affect his mother?

John the Baptist

John is preparing the way for someone special – who is it?



Simon Peter

A loyal friend to Jesus. Can he help Mary through events no mother should experience?

Mary Magdalene

One of Jesus's closest friends. What experiences will she share with Jesus's mother?





MARY OF GALILEE

My son. Even now those words swell my aging heart with love before wringing it with agony. I want to shout his name from the rooftops; I want to curl up tightly and weep. Oh, my son.

You've probably heard stories of his birth, his life and his death. Can you spare the time to listen to my account? I should like to tell the whole story, just once, before I die. You needn't worry that the swiftly-passing years might have diminished my memory. How could incidents of such intensity ever fade? Every day of my life I live with the physical pain and motherly joy of the beginning, and with the maternal agony and spiritual reward of the end.



I'm sure I'm not the only person to have wondered why God chose me. I still wonder. I was an ordinary Jewish girl from an ordinary, happy family.

My parents were good people who kept the Lord's commandments. We loved God, we loved each other, and we loved our life in the Galilean village of Nazareth. I also loved Joseph, a craftsman, who had recently asked me to marry him. As I said, ordinary. Nothing unusual.

Do you believe in angels? I think I had always believed in them, but that didn't make it any less of a shock when one appeared before me. I must have been about fourteen years old when it happened. I was alone in the house, sewing, when the quality of the light seemed to change. I squinted up from my close work. As my eyes gradually adjusted, I saw a man, or at least a being, all in white, suffused with the purest light you can imagine. You ask me how I felt? Afraid, of course.

The angel smiled. 'Do not be afraid. The Lord is with you.' I stared, transfixed. His voice was gentle. 'Mary, you have pleased God.



You will soon be with child. You will give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be called the Son of the Most High, and his kingdom will never end.'

My mind span so quickly that I felt dizzy. 'How can this happen?' My voice must have been a terrified squeak. 'I am unmarried, a virgin.'

Biblical sources

Although *Mary of Galilee* is based on the story as told in the gospel of Luke, there are places where we have drawn on other sources. On the *Real Reads* website you will find an online concordance (www.realreads.co.uk/newtestament/concordance/maryofgalilee). A 'bible concordance' is an indexing tool which allows you to see how the same words, sentences and passages appear in different versions and translations of the Bible. This online concordance will direct you from events in the *Real Reads* version back to their biblical sources, so you can see clearly where each part of our story is drawn from.

Life in New Testament times

The main events of Mary's life took place in Palestine, a long narrow area of land bordered to the west by the Mediterranean Sea and to the east by the Transjordanian Desert. Some parts of Palestine were desert, some were hill country, some rich pasture land, and some uncultivated wilderness.

