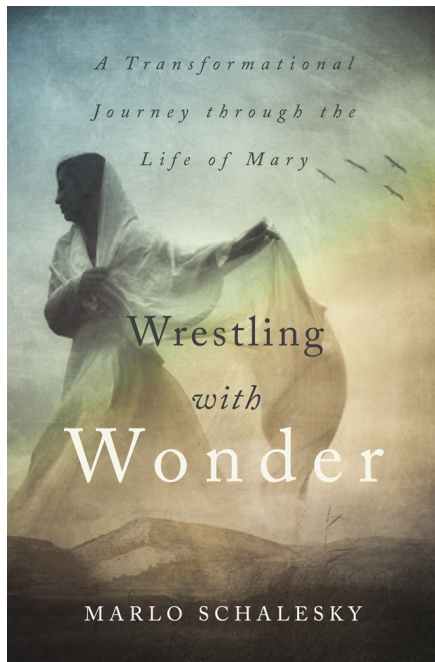




DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

For GROUPS

WRESTLING WITH WONDER

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Ideally, questions and discussion will arise naturally in your group as you dig deeper into Mary's story and how it relates to your own. Below are some suggested questions to help get your group started. However, the Holy Spirit may lead your group in another direction as you explore the concepts in *Wrestling with Wonder*. Be sensitive to the Spirit and to the tender places in the life and experience of your group as you wrestle to discover His wonder together.

Introduction

- 1) Have you ever come to a place in your life where you feel undone, like you're a mess, and everything's gone wrong? Share about a time when you didn't know if you could go on.
- 2) Have you ever, like Cain, felt rejected either by God or by others, for something you've done?
- 3) On page 16, the author asks, "What if [God's] favor includes pain, poverty, sorrow, and even death?" Does this question challenge the way you think about being favored by God?
- 4) What is most surprising to you about the thought of being like Mary, of her journey as the mother of Christ being similar to your journey with God? How do you feel as you ponder the thought of sharing her journey?

CHAPTER 1: Unexpected Interruptions

- 1) Describe a time or situation where your plans were interrupted.
- 2) If God were to interrupt your plans or dreams with something that seemed extraordinary, what would be your response? What would you have to overcome in order to follow Him?
- 3) What do you think it means for you personally that you are favored?

CHAPTER 2: Blessedness Redefined

- 1) When you were a child, what did it mean for you to be blessed?
- 2) Do you think Mary, at this time in her journey, understood blessedness? What was her understanding?
- 3) What does it really mean to be blessed? What does it mean for you personally?

CHAPTER 3: Rough Journeys

- 1) What do you think were Mary's emotions when she was told by Joseph that they had to make the journey to Bethlehem?
- 2) Have you ever had to go through a journey that you just didn't understand?
- 3) What does this tell you about God and how he treats his favored ones?

CHAPTER 4: Life in the Barn

- 1) Why didn't God provide a safe, clean place for them to stay in Bethlehem?

- 2) Have you ever encountered God in a strange place?
- 3) After reading this chapter, why do you think Jesus was born in a barn?

CHAPTER 5: Embracing Mystery

- 1) What was so mysterious about the shepherds' visit that caused Mary to ponder?
- 2) What is the most mysterious thing about God in your life? Are there experiences that you just don't understand?
- 3) What does it mean for you to wrestle, wait, and wonder?

CHAPTER 6: The Soul-Piercing Sword

- 1) Mary is beginning to learn what it means to be highly favored. What do you suppose she felt when Simeon told her that she was to be pierced? Do you think she knew this meant suffering?
- 2) Was there a time in your life when you experienced suffering? Did you encounter God?
- 3) How do you reconcile the idea that Mary's blessing included a piercing of her soul, pain and suffering? How does that change the way you approach suffering in your own life? Do you think of it as something strange and unnatural, or something that is part of God's will for you, or something else?

CHAPTER 7: Running in the Dark

- 1) Marlo says in this chapter “God’s goal is not safety or comfort, or the simple path to glory. God values something else. And so must we.” Do you agree? Why or why not?
- 2) What is it that you think he values more than our safety and comfort?
- 3) Have you ever felt like you were in exile? Do you think there was a purpose to that time of exile?

CHAPTER 8: Not Why but Who

- 1) If you are a parent, have you ever temporarily lost your child in a store or amusement park? How did you feel?
- 2) Have you ever had a prayer that was just not answered in a way you could accept or understand? OR Have you ever asked God the famous “WHY?” question? What was His answer?
- 3) Marlo says, “All the answers to ‘why’ will not satisfy the longing in our souls. But God’s answer of ‘who’ satisfies us with wonder.” What does this mean? Do you agree? Why or why not?

CHAPTER 9: The Fine Art of Waiting

- 1) Is there anything in your life that God has made you wait for?
- 2) What do you think is the hardest part about waiting for God to fulfill His promises?

3) What was the result of having to wait? Was it similar to Mary in that it required submission to Christ or some other major change?

CHAPTER 10: God, Have You Lost Your Mind?

1) When you look back on your journey of faith, were there any expectations about God that He shattered?

2) What should we do when God doesn't appear to be what we expect? What should we expect?

3) In your life right now, where is God calling you to leave your expectations at the door and come sit at His feet to listen and learn?

CHAPTER 11: When Nightmares Come True

1) Reflect on a time when God did not answer your prayer in the way you wanted. Maybe He said "NO." Maybe He was silent. Describe your feelings and thoughts.

2) Have you ever experienced a time in your life when you prayed and prayed and things just got worse and worse? If so, how do you reconcile the idea of God's love for you with these kinds of experiences?

2) Marlo says that God's main concern is to build us into Christ's image – not to take away our pain or nightmares. Do you agree? What does this mean to you?

CHAPTER 12: He Still Cares

1) Remember a time in your life when you felt most distant from God. In the midst of this time, do you think He was caring for you? How so?

2) Have you ever experienced the care of God through others during a difficult time? Describe what that care looked like and how you knew God was caring for you.

3) The next time you feel alone and forgotten, what can you do to remind yourself that Jesus does indeed see you, and does care for you?

CHAPTER 13: In the Dark

1) Have you ever experienced total darkness...literally? Have you ever experienced spiritual darkness, where nothing made sense, where you could not see, hear or understand anything? Share how you felt during those times.

2) Why is it that God can do His most important work in our lives during times of darkness?

3) Are you facing a time of darkness now? What insight from this chapter do you find most helpful as you kneel in your dark time?

CHAPTER 14: Breaking and Remaking

1) There is no greater tragedy for a person than to experience the death of their child. Mary experienced this ultimate sorrow. How do you think Jesus' death broke her? What do you think she thought about being favored during the next three days?

2) Today, we know much more than Mary did about how Jesus' death was infinitely important and part of God's plan for salvation. Looking back, we understand things she could not have understood or grasped at the time. How does this help us when we are going through times of breaking that we can't make sense of?

3) When we experience death-like breaking, how can we know that God can re-make us?

CHAPTER 15: A Shocking Transformation

1) Imagine Mary's awe when she encountered the risen Christ. Try to describe her wonder in those moments. Have you ever experienced a moment of awe and wonder that drew you to God?

2) Has there been a situation in your life where you have experienced resurrection-like transformation of something that was dead? A time where a hope or dream has died, but God has altered your path to something incredible, something new, something amazing? If so, share with your group.

3) How does the testimony of other group members help you to face any current struggles with death-like circumstances in your life?

CHAPTER 16: The Wonder of His Love

1) Looking back on Mary's journey, how would you describe her being highly favored? What do you think that means for her?

2) How do you relate with Mary or her journey? What place in her journey do you think you are right now?

3) Knowing now what Mary had to encounter, would you have said "yes" back in chapter 1? Knowing what you personally may experience with a life in Christ in your future, will you say "yes?"

CHAPTER 17: Eyewitness and Servant

- 1) As you reflect on the life of Mary – all of her expectations, experiences, sorrows, and joy, how would you describe this resurrected, living God that she served?
- 2) What is your own personal response to this God of the unexpected?
- 3) If you were to sit down with Luke and give an “eyewitness account” of your life with Christ, what highlights would you share with the world and the generations to come?