

WRESTLING WITH WONDER
An INTERVIEW with Author MARLO SCHALESKY

Q: What is *Wrestling with Wonder* anyway?

A: It's the story of Mary. It's the story of you. It's the story of me.
It is the real story of a surrendered soul...
It's a journey through a life that will look surprisingly like your own...
It's an adventure of discovering God where you didn't expect Him to be ...
You've never seen Mary, or her God, like this!

Q: Okay, that sounds intriguing! But why should I read this book?

A: What if God is more passionate, more wild, and more wondrous than you ever believed him to be? What if he is calling you deeper than your dreams? What if he's calling you to the foot of the cross?

Wrestling with Wonder invites readers to walk with Mary, Jesus' mother, on a journey of God's favor and to discover their own journeys reflected in hers. Through fictional retellings of Mary's story, careful exegesis, and moving personal examples, *Wrestling with Wonder* focuses not on Mary's character but instead on the amazing, incredible, and perplexing God who burst into her life and changed everything.

Through this transformational, contemplative encounter with the life of Mary, readers are invited to see God's purpose, discover how he works in the lives of those he calls highly favored, and experience him in deeper ways in their own lives. They are invited to come, wrestle with wonder, and find God on the wild journey from an angel's unexpected arrival to beyond an empty tomb. Find him, and be transformed ...

Q: Why will readers enjoy *Wrestling with Wonder*? Why is this a "Must-Read" book?

A: When I say readers have never seen Mary, or her God, like this before - I mean it! Mary's journey was transformational for me, and I think it will be for readers too. It seems that in our culture we either deify Mary or we ignore her altogether, but the truth is, she's a lot like you and me. Her journey with God reveals so much about our own journeys. It shows us God in ways we may have never seen Him before.

After all, everyone wants to be highly favored by God. And yet, like Mary, we face hardships, life's unexpected twists and turns, and times when God seems absent. What do we do with this apparent discrepancy? We walk with Mary through her journey, and let her and her God, walk with us in ours.

In the end, this book invites readers to recapture their hope, restore their souls, and renew their vision of a passionate and breath-taking God. It encourages them to experience a walk of faith that is vibrant in the face of disappointment, a relationship that is dynamic, alive – wondrous! It says, “Come, join the adventure of being highly-favored of God!”

Q: Do you always write about wonder?

A: I’ve written about many themes, but the thread that runs through all my work is discovering the wonder of God in everyday life. This is what I say on my website, which I think captures the theme and the dream for my writing:

Pause for a moment and remember back to when you were a kid. Do you remember running through the sprinklers, arms outstretched? Blowing bubbles that caught every shade of light? Catching your breath at the sight of a dragonfly? Do you remember the laughter, the joy ... the WONDER? Now glance around you. Has your life turned out just as you expected it to be?

If you answered yes, you’re in the wrong place. But if, like so many of us, your life hasn’t turned out just as you dreamed it, well then, you’ve found a place to call home. For thirsty souls yearning for a VIVID God, for the hurting, the disillusioned, the struggling, the weak, and those longing for more of God, come, journey with me into WONDER . . . You’re welcome here.

Q: Why did you title this book “Wrestling with Wonder”?

A: Although *Wrestling with Wonder* is called “a transformational journey through the life of Mary,” it is not, at its heart, a book about Mary at all! Rather, it is a book about the God we encounter through her journey and through our own. This is a book that, on every page, invites readers to wrestle with the wonder of a God who calls us blessed, then sends us on a journey of difficult moments and unexpected answers, a journey where a sword will pierce our souls, and we won’t understand, and someday we may find ourselves kneeling in the darkness at the foot of the cross.

Through Mary’s journey, readers will discover the wonder of a Messiah who shatters our expectations yet fulfills all his promises. Readers will be called to live in the wonder of who God really is ... who he was in Mary’s journey, who he is in ours.

Because in this story, we must wrestle and in doing so, we will be filled with wonder.

Q: Since *Wrestling with Wonder* is called a “transformational journey” how

were you changed or transformed through the writing of this book?

A: This book changed me, transformed me, at the deepest levels. And it wasn't because I saw Mary more clearly, I was because I saw God – vivid, beautiful, perplexing ... and so unlike the bland prayer-answerer-santa-in-the-sky that we often believe him to be. Through wrestling with Mary's story, and my own in the context of hers, I encountered a God who blew away my expectations. I found him in my own heartaches, in the life's-gone-awry moments of those close to me, in tears of a woman who lived thousands of years before me.

When I sat with her in a dirty, stinky stable, when I raced back to Jerusalem, panting with fear over a lost son, when I stood at a crowded doorway and heard him say, "Who are my mother and my brothers?," when I knelt with her at the foot of a cross and listened to his breath stop as the sky turned black as pitch ... I found God in the dirty, stinky, fearful, hurting, black-as-pitch places in my life too. And I hope, I pray, that readers will take this journey with Mary and I and discover God in those places too, those places in their own lives where they never expected him to be.

Q: Who's this book for anyway? Would it make a good gift?

A: This book would make an excellent gift, especially at Christmastime! This is who I think the book is especially written for:

--It is for those who want to delve deeper into the character of God in the face of plans gone awry, expectations thwarted, and a God who doesn't seem to make sense.

--It is for those who are experiencing difficulty in their lives. Those going through divorce, financial crisis, broken relationships, job loss, health problems, death of a loved one, a child's illness, infertility, miscarriage, failure, betrayal by family or friends, or trouble with their adult children will not be told how to live, but will instead be taken on a journey of healing and hope into the heart of God.

--It is for those facing a spiritual crisis of disappointment, doubt, or a feeling of distance from God due to unanswered prayer and painful circumstances. Some of these readers will be barely hanging on to faith and hope, while others will be struggling to understand God's purposes in their pain.

--*Wrestling With Wonder* readers will be asking questions such as, "How can I press deeper into God's love when my world has been turned upside down?" or "Where is God now that I need Him most?" They will be crying out, with the father from Mark 9:24, "I believe! Help my unbelief!" *Wrestling With Wonder* addresses these questions not by attempting to answer "why" but by revealing more of "who" God really is.

-- For this reader, the old cliches of "God is good," "God won't give you more than

you can handle,” or “Just have faith” aren’t enough. She wants more. She wants a deeper understanding, a more vibrant faith, a fuller trust in God even when life doesn’t make sense.

--It is especially for those who yearn to rise above the ordinary, who long for a new glimpse of God in a world gone gray, who hunger for the adventure of what life in God could be . . . this book is for them!

--*Wrestling With Wonder* is also suitable for group studies and can to be given as a gift to those going through difficulty.

Q: What facet of the writing craft comes easiest to you? What do you struggle with?

A: *Wrestling with Wonder* has a section in each chapter where a part of Mary's story is retold in a fictional way using first person present tense. It's meant to help us see and feel what it must have been like for her and to draw us into the story. Those first person present scenes are what comes easiest for me. I so loved just closing my eyes, meditating on the scripture, then imaging Mary's journey and bringing it to life in words. I love that part! I hope readers will too.

As for the biggest struggle, besides trying to find time, quiet, and space to string two thoughts together (let alone write) with six kids and all those various and sundry pets, the marketing part of writing is the biggest burden to me. It doesn't help that I'm an introvert and find that chitchatting online is just as draining as chitchatting in person. So, I've decided to focus on what I love -- finding the wonder of God in everyday life. I talk about that. I just want to see God working and moving and whispering to me of truth in everything that happens to me and happens around me. I don't want to tweet about my breakfast ... unless of course I find something interesting about God in my eggs and toast (you never know, I have found God's truth in bad eggs before, and blogged about it!).

Q: Tell us something interesting about your life now.

A: Well, I scoop a lot of poop ... I have eight horses, six cats, two parakeets, one rabbit, one rat, one dog, three chinchillas, five goldfish, and one lonely betta ... currently. (Note: Critter numbers may change without notice, especially if I attend yet another adoption event for rescue animals ... to my husband's chagrin.) So, yes, there is a lot of poop scooping that goes on around here! But we love our pets. When you have six kids, you have to have a lot of pets too – that’s in the rule book. But of all these 28 (oh my, are there really 28?!), my favorite is my horse, Jewel. She’s half-Arabian, half-Fox-Trotter, 18 year old chestnut mare, and her and I love to run the trails (bareback) on our property with our hair flying behind us and nuthin’ but joy in our hearts. And that’s where we both find the wonder of our Vivid God!

Q: Finally, if readers want to discover more about you, or about finding the wonder of God in everyday life, where should they go?

A: I hope readers will visit my website at <http://www.VividGod.com> and sign up for my quarterly Tales of Wonder newsletter. Then, for daily thoughts on finding the wonder of God in everyday life, I hope they'll "like" my page on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/MarloSchalesky> or follow me on Twitter <http://www.twitter.com/MarloSchalesky>.