

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Communications – Cissie Graham Lynch
Fearless – Ep 113 – Mary’s Song
Final Transcript**

MUSIC STARTS

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:00:02 Hi, I’m Cissie Graham Lynch. Welcome to *Fearless*, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie:

00:00:22 Welcome back to another episode of *Fearless*, and this is the last episode of the year, which is really hard to believe. But, this past weekend I was in Asheville, North Carolina, speaking at The Cove, the Billy Graham Training Center—which, of course, is one of my favorite places to visit. It’s a special place for my family and I. But I wanted to share with you what has been on my heart about what we can learn from the life of Mary.

I know so often that this is a busy time of year and we can rush by everything, and my prayer has just been not to rush by the nativity, not to rush by Mary, and not to rush by Jesus this Christmas season. And, I wanted to share with you the four disciplines we can learn from the life of Mary that might not come natural to our human spirit.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie:

00:01:10 Good afternoon. It is so fun for me to come. I call this home, North Carolina, because as my brother said, I live in southwest Florida—Fort Myers, Florida—with my husband and three children. So, when I come home to North Carolina, I feel like I can breathe, but especially coming to The Cove. I think anybody in my immediate family—my extended family—we would say this might be one of the most precious places to our family. As you learned, this was the envision my grandmother had, and for me, when you go around The Cove, you definitely see her touches and just you see her through everything. So I love coming home to The Cove.

I love being with my Aunt Gigi. We ate lunch with her, and she has us all laughing. I often say that Gigi is probably the most like my grandmother when it comes to the personality. She’s the most fun, always has you rolling, and just there’s a wit, a quick wit about her, and that was the thing about my grandmother: She always just had such a great sense of humor. And so I love spending time with my family, my brother, and my sister-in-law. I will say, it’s also a little bit intimidating coming back and having family in the audience and being on the stage that my grandfather spoke, and I believe some of our time’s greatest teachers have been on this stage, so this is a special place for us.

But we’re here and it’s Christmas, [chuckle] and this always just seems to be crunch time. We’re rush, rush, rush, rush, rush. I don’t know about you, but for me this week has just been—I should say the last few weeks—rushing and I can’t seem to get

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caught up. I told my husband—he was gone to Alaska working with Samaritan’s Purse this week. We passed by for 30 minutes at the airport and we got one kiss in the parking lot and I just said, “Why am I not a woman that can keep it all together?” And I don’t know about you, but I’m sure there’s some ladies in here that have everything wrapped and you’re already ready, but there might be some of you who’ve come today that this is just one more on that never-ending to-do list that we have at Christmastime.

And, especially as moms. Right before I got here, my kids had a party to [go] to. My little girl’s present didn’t show up. I’m Instacart-ing. I don’t know if they have that here in Asheville, but they can deliver in 30 minutes to your house, and I’m having it wrapped before I go to the airport. It’s just like things we have to think about that my husband would not dare think about. He’s many wonderful things, but I needed today. I needed to come here. I needed to come through the gates of The Cove. Whew. To breathe. I don’t want to rush by the Christmas season. I love the traditions. I love the excitement. I don’t want that sense of panic that we got to get it all done. I don’t want to rush by the nativity. I don’t want to rush by Mary. I don’t want to rush by Jesus—to think that the Son of God left the throne of Heaven, whose arms wrap around the world and hold us in His arms. He came down as a baby to be held in the arms of a teenager, and I don’t want to rush by that. So we’re here today, and I’m so excited to be with you ladies, that you would decide to come here today to spend with me. Whew.

My aunt might have elevated me a little bit higher than I deserve. I was sitting upstairs thinking, “Lord, why?” I just, I feel very humbled to be here on this stage, so thank you. Let’s begin with prayer. Lord, we come today, as so many of us might be weary, we might be tired. There are some that maybe have everything put together and already done, but Lord, we’re coming to spend just a couple of hours with You, to worship You, to spend time with You. We don’t want to rush by that nativity this Christmas season. That we would have our hearts quiet to hear Your Word, to learn from the Christmas story. May You just speak to us in this short time. In Jesus’ Name, I pray, amen.

When I was a kid, I thought my purpose on this Earth was to sing at my grandfather’s Crusades and to sing at my dad Franklin Graham’s Festivals. I knew that was my purpose. I’m a ’90s kid. I listened to Jaci Velasquez singing at my dad’s crusades like when Michael W. Smith and DC Talk were coming out and singing at my grandfather’s Crusades. I knew that was God’s purpose. Well, a little known fact, us Grahams, we don’t have that singing app downloaded in us. We cannot sing. Even down here in the corner, I’m like mouthing the words because I’m so afraid they were going to accidentally hit my mic on while y’all are all singing. Because in fourth grade, my dream came to a stop. I was cast the role of just, like, my dream part in a play. I was Snow White, and I had to sing, “Some Day My Prince Will Come” to somebody that was anything but prince charming in the corner and my voice and my tune was anything but awe-inspiring.

As I was standing in there with the bright light shining on me and like, “Some day my prince will come.” It went up and down. I could see people giggling. I could see my

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fourth grade crush just laughing. I even saw my mom and my brother Will was home from college visiting and they were rolling, laughing in the stands. My mom had to stop the car on the way home because she was laughing so hard. [laughter] So, if we’re still talking about songs, I actually still have those dreams, and I start getting sweaty and nervous that the lights are coming to come on and I have to sing.

But I love music, I love songs, and of course we all love to sing songs this time of year, and whether we can sing or carry a tune, we’re singing no matter what. Because one time I was going to try again. I was going to try my dream one more time. We went Christmas caroling for church. I was in high school, and my high school boyfriend’s sister looked at me and goes, “Is that *you* making that noise?” [laughter] So we’ll leave the singing to others, but this Christmas season, whether people believe in Jesus Christ or not, they’re singing the Gospel. There’s so many of those classic songs. And let me ask you—I do believe there’s two types of people in this world. One who turn on the Christmas music Nov. 1. or it’s a Dec. 1. I even heard somebody say the other day they don’t turn it on until the week of Christmas.

So, I was actually impressed. We were on a road trip the other day, and my husband was turning on the Christmas music, and I told him, I said, “I’m so impressed with you. Most men wouldn’t do that.” But have you ever thought about what the first Christmas song was? A lot of us probably think it might have been Luke 2 when the angels came in the darkness of the night to the shepherds to announce the birth of Christ, but the first Christmas song was actually before that—nine months before that.

And it was Mary. It was right after the angel appeared to her to tell her that she was going to give birth to a Son and she was to call Him Jesus. And it was right after she went to go visit Elizabeth, her cousin, who was also expecting a miraculous birth and to give birth to John the Baptist. And it was when Mary’s life was turned upside down, when she was thrown a curve ball, she sang. And it’s in Luke 1:47, we’re going to read it. I just got a new Bible and it doesn’t have any markings in it yet, and that’s a very strange feeling when you open up your Bible and it doesn’t have any markings in it yet. But in Luke 1, it’s the song of Mary, and it says, “*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.*” Just know she knows that they will call her blessed. She’s not giving the blessings or a blessing. She will be called blessed. “*For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him*”—those who take God seriously—“*from generation to generation.*” For, “*He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He [has] spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.*”

And what do we know about Mary? We know she was a young girl; some say maybe as young as 12, 13, 14, 15, a young teenager. She was not educated. We know that she didn’t come from a wealthy family. She came from this very small kind of

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passerby town. We know in John 1, *Nathanael answered him [and said], “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” [And] Philip replied, “Come and see.”* But what does her song reveal to us? It reveals that her heart was saturated with God’s Word. At a young age, she had hidden God’s Word in her heart because the song of Mary is a parallel to Hannah’s song in 1 Samuel, so she had known the Scriptures, that she hid it in her heart.

And it was also her reaction to when life threw her a curve ball that she was not expecting that she was able to sing at a young age. She also had a generational understanding of the faithfulness of God. She had an eternal mindset. And I think so often in our generation, especially me as a millennial, we don’t have a mindset of eternity. We live in the here and we live in the now—we’re quick. We want this. We don’t have that mindset of eternity to come. And her response was she praised Him. I believe that it shows us four things in her response, all disciplines that don’t come natural to our human spirit. Our earthly disciplines reflect our eternal disciplines. She submitted, she served, she suffered, and she sang.

And the first one: She submitted. She surrendered it all to God. Scripture says, in her response to the angel, “*May it be done to me according to your word.’ And the angel departed.*” In that submission, there was such peace in her answer, even with so much unknown.

My family and I were, we’ve been recently watching the TV series on Hallmark called, *When Calls the Heart*. Are there any hearties in here? There are a lot. Not Swifties, we’re Hearties, OK? And my son—because I’m a mom, I don’t like watching cartoons with my kids. I don’t like watching kids’ movies. So, I kind of find things that I can enjoy watching that they’ll watch with me, and my 7-year-old son loves *When Calls the Heart*. So, on a weeknight, if we’ve done all of our homework, they’ll say, “Can we watch *When Calls the Heart*?” And so, recently on an episode we just watched, the main character, Elizabeth, just submitted a story. She was writing the story of her life, and she submitted it to the editor, and it came back with a lot of red marks, and she was offended and upset. And if I talk to any of my friends who are authors, or who are writers, and they’re making submissions to the publishers, they say they feel very vulnerable to let go of their story, to let go of control of their story, in order for their story to get out there. And, before our story can be told, we have to submit it to God for Him to tell our story. It has to go under *His* submission.

And in 2023, ‘submission’ is an ugly word. Right? That’s a word we don’t really like, especially for a younger generation and especially with women. We *really* don’t like that word anymore. And I’m not going to dare go into the debate of submission, especially in marriage roles here. We don’t have time for that today. But what I’m talking about today is our submission to God. And the word ‘submitted’ comes from Latin, the word is ‘under a mission,’ ‘sub’ meaning ‘under,’ and the Latin *misio* says, ‘let go, to send,’ and we’re all under a mission and that’s God’s mission. And we have to fully surrender that, to let go, for Him to tell His story through us and through our story.

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Proverbs 3:6 says, “*In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*” And I guarantee from that moment, from Mary’s point of view, when that angel came to her, her path looked anything but straight. She had a rush of questions going through her head: “How can this be?” “What will Joseph do?” “What will my community say?” “What will my parents say and do?” But she submitted with a peace. Mary’s submission—I love this; I read this this past week—Mary’s submission was to God, and it served as her crowning touch of her humble confidence. She had peace in that submission. She was confident in that. Think about those conversations she would have had going to her parents and what that would have been like, but she had the confidence of the peace that she had when she was fully surrendered to God. Because sure, she had plans. We all have a lot of plans and those plans often get turned upside down, they get changed, those dreams get crushed or they’re broken, but God has His plan when we fully submit it. And she gave up her ordinary life to become a part of God’s extraordinary plan.

And submission doesn’t come naturally to us. I believe it’s something we constantly have to work on. It’s a discipline we have to work on and there’s different kinds of forms of submission and different roles we have in relationships, with a spouse, with our boss, and authority, if you’re a young one in here and you’ve got a coach or a teacher. There’s different kinds that God is constantly teaching us. It doesn’t matter how old you get, we’re constantly still learning those disciplines of submission and letting go—full surrender to God. Because I can’t tell you how often, especially in this past year, I really wrestled with God, battling it out in some private prayers with a lot of questions that I had. And it’s like the song, “I surrender all,” and, “All to Him I freely give.” Her submission was in recognizing the sovereignty of God and her need for a Savior, which led her to serve Him wholeheartedly.

So, the second one leads us to: She served. Another discipline that doesn’t come natural to many of us. And Mary’s simple response says, “I am the Lord’s servant. May Your Word be fulfilled.” And in our society, and our culture, service without the expectation of anything in return can be an afterthought at most, and sometimes maybe something greatly avoided. And it seems like even for those that are, their careers, in the service industry now, some people seem to resent it, maybe especially after a post-COVID world. I mean, unless you’re at The Cove, of course, we have service with a smile. But I can guarantee you all of y’all have recognized that the service quality in the service industry has gone way down. There’s a little local cafe, or actually it’s a national cafe I go to quite often, and it’s kind of my mission to see if I can get some of these young girls to smile. [laughter] You know, you ask them for something and they kind of look at you like, “Fine, I’ll get it.” That’s what she said to me the other day. [laughter]

But I read this Christmas story of a woman who was struggling in life. She had just suffered severe loss in her life, and due to that loss, she had severe anxiety and depression, and on top of that, she had some health issues. And it was around the Christmastime, so of course, that’s all magnified during the season, those feelings, and her phone rings, and she picks it up, and it’s her neighbor, and he says, “Look outside.” And he had strung a strand of Christmas lights from his house across the street to her house and said, “You and I are forever connected,” and left a gift of

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cookies at her front door. And because of that act of service, the whole neighborhood down the street connected the lights going back and forth, and it lightened her darkness. It was that moment of service that gave her just that fulfillment that she wasn’t alone.

And I’ve often been asked, especially after my grandfather passed away, “What have I learned from my family the most?” And I’ve often said one of the greatest things I’ve learned, especially from my parents, is service. I grew up under the umbrella of Samaritan’s Purse, which it’s our mission to go serve those around the world who are in the ditches of life. Because it’s in that moment when you serve somebody in their greatest time of need—and you don’t have to go across the world on an international trip with Samaritan’s Purse to serve—but when you serve your neighbor, or a friend in your church, or a widow in your church, or somebody that needs it, there’s no greater way to show the love of Jesus, to build that relationship, to show them the hope of Jesus. And my family’s taught my brothers and I that. I was just watching my brother; I’ll embarrass him here for a moment, that during the two lunch services, he’s in there cleaning the tables with the staff, and that’s not to pat us on the back. That is something I’ve tried to instill into my children: that we’re here to serve because that’s what God has commanded us to do.

Every summer, my family and I go to Alaska. My husband works with Samaritan’s Purse. He works on a church build in some villages, but I take my children, it’s called Operation Heal Our Patriots. And people ask why do we do that summer after summer for like six to eight weeks. And I said because it’s my only time that I get to serve, where I don’t have to have a camera in my face, I don’t have to have a microphone, I don’t have to prepare a speech, but I get to serve. I get to serve with our volunteers. My family’s also taught me there’s no services beneath me. You know, my dad at a young age had us shoveling snow and cleaning toilets at Samaritan’s Purse and to this day I’m with our volunteers cleaning bathrooms, serving coffee, washing—wherever the need is, and I *love* to do that and I love to teach my kids that.

In Matthew 20 we read about the mother of James and John, and she had a wish. And she went to Jesus and had this wish that she wanted her sons on the right and the left side of Jesus into His kingdom. And Jesus responded that, “*Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.*” That Jesus makes it clear there’s nothing greater, nothing more Christlike than surrendering our lives to serving others.

And I’ve learned, too, that service just doesn’t bless others. God doesn’t just command us to serve others ... but service can also heal our own hearts. And that I think so many times when we’re in our own trials, whether it’s anxiety and depression, or whatever we’re facing with marriage, or with loss, or financial issues, that sometimes we can get so caught up in our own grief that we’ve lost sight of anybody else around us, and that that can drown us. And I’ve learned, when I was in high school and in college, for about three years, I struggled with an addiction. And I just, I prayed over and over, and Lord just wouldn’t heal me from that addiction. He wouldn’t free me from that bondage. And I took a semester off from college, and I

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went and worked in Thailand in a babies’ home. And anything about an addiction, it’s self-serving. It’s self-centered, because you wake up thinking of yourself first thing in the morning; you go to bed thinking of yourself, the last thing. And when you work in a babies’ home, you don’t have time to think of yourself. The first thing I was doing was waking up thinking of those children and going to bed thinking of those kids. And I realized over the course of those three months that God had freed me from that. He healed me when I began to serve Him, and not thinking of myself.

Mary knew she surrendered her life for a life of service to God, and the responsibility of raising the Son of God, and that she had an unwavering focus to serve Him, even if it would lead to suffering.

And that leads us to the third one, that she suffered. Just recently I was in Italy with my family; my dad was speaking, and we went to visit the Vatican, and I had been there a few times, and we went into St. Peter’s Basilica. And I know sometimes you can get in there and it can be overwhelming, and Mary can tend to be idolized when you go into some of those places, and a lot of times I can just walk by, you look at it, it’s beautiful, learn the history of it. But there’s a marble sculpture there when you go and it’s the Pietà and it’s the sculpture of Mary—depicting Mary—holding her Son Jesus after He would have come down from the cross on Golgotha. And I just sat there and reflected on what her life meant when she surrendered it, she served, but that she would suffer.

She suffered physically. Think at a young age. I mean, I have a 10-year-old girl. I can’t imagine in a couple of years her going off with her fiancé, giving birth in a cave. This is a young girl that was taken away from her family. She’d never been intimate with a man. And for us women, let’s think about for a moment: She wasn’t giving birth with her mother next to her side or with a lady in her community and her village; she was giving birth with Joseph next to her side, with a man that she had never been intimate with, at a young age. And I’ve often reflected on that and I think about just, the temptation. I know we don’t read about it in Scripture about the temptation that Mary would have faced, but we know that Satan tempted Jesus, so he had to have tempted Mary.

And I often think while she was in that cave, maybe she had just given birth, and she’s holding the Son of God in her arms, and it’s dark, that you know Satan, because Jesus was here on Earth, you know Satan began to hover. And what are the whispers he told her? What was he saying? “You’re not worthy.” “You’re not capable of raising the Son.” “He’s not the Son of God.” “He’s not the Messiah.” “He’s not here to redeem the world.” “He can’t do that.” “You have Him here in a cave, in a feeding trough.” So, I think of those things that, as the mother of Jesus, just the spiritual warfare she would have had.

But think about the reputation she would have suffered. Think of all the women gossiping in town about this lady and what would have been. I believe it probably wasn’t until the first miracle at the wedding feast when Jesus turned the water into wine and she was probably like, “Come on, this is my time. Prove to them that I’m not lying. Prove to them You are the Son of God.”

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But you think of a mother’s devotion, and there’s some of you here in this room that have lost a child, and there’s some of that you have walked with your children with sicknesses and that maybe you’ve spent days and weeks in a hospital with your children. A pain that is so great. And often think is how sweet is it that we serve a God that knows that pain? That He’s lost His own Son, that He’s walked through that. But I think of Mary’s devotion to be in Jerusalem, to watch your Son be hated before the world, to take the cross of her sins on Him, to go before the world, to spread His arms out wide, to surrender His own life for you and for me, for her, His mother. What that would have been like to watch your Son go through that? That was suffering that she endured, a lifelong, but her mind was focused on eternity and on the cross and what God had called her to do.

That even Simeon, who was prophesying. He was a devout, godly man that was promised that he would see the Messiah before he passed away. He said, *“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against [you], so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”* And in that moment, she learned—you know that song, “Mary, Did You Know?” Oh, she knew. She knew. She had learned that her Child’s life and His mission would fill her future with intense pain and suffering, both as a mother and as a disciple.

And as His disciples, you and me, we will have suffering and it’s painful to walk through those times. And for Mary, that was her double-edged sword that pierced her soul. I know some of us that maybe we’re going through a season of suffering. Maybe you’ve just come out of this season of suffering. And if you’re not, you might be going into entering one. And we do all we can, right? It’s not our human nature, right? All these are against our natural—we don’t want to suffer. Nobody wants to suffer. We will do anything we can to avoid it or to keep our children from suffering.

And I know in times past—especially, I’ve been very open since giving birth to my last child, just about my past year—and there are many times that I felt like I was surviving and not thriving. And just as I know, I want to remind you as women in Isaiah a verse that I’ve clung to is that *“the Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in [the] scorched places ...”* He will be with you in the desert. He will be with you in the suffering. He will guide you and it says, *“... and give strength to your bones.”* You’re not just going to survive; you’re going to thrive. He will strengthen your bones in those moments of those scorched places. *“And you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.”* You will be a spring that overflows.

She submitted, she served, she suffered, but her response is she sang. She praised God. And praising God is not based on our feelings or emotions. It’s a command in Scripture, and it’s common throughout Scripture. We probably have some of the many Scriptures that are our favorite that we cling to about praising God. We sing about them. There’s approximately 250 declarative statements and commands about praising God through Scripture. Psalm 150 says, *“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.”* 2 Samuel, *“Therefore I will praise you, Lord, among the nations;*

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[and] *I will sing the praises of your name.*” We’re commanded to praise Him in the good and in the bad.

American Pastor James H. Brooks told of visiting a friend’s house and hearing the music of a bird singing, and it was not the ordinary sound of chirping. Instead, it resembled the strains of a lovely melody. At first, Brooks didn’t know where it was coming from, but when he glanced around the room, he saw a beautiful bullfinch in the cage. And the lady of the house explained that it had been taught to sing that way at night. The teacher would repeat the notes time and again until the bird was able to mimic them, but this was only possible because it was dark and the bird’s attention would not be diverted. And I think, how often do our sweetest songs come out of the darkness of the night, when God is teaching us something? I think of Scripture and all the beautiful songs that David wrote when he was in those deepest valleys.

I often think if you have a bucket of water and you hit this bump in your life, or if you hit a bump, what’s going to come out of the bucket? Water. Yeah, it’s not a trick question. Water’s going to come out of it. And I think, too, if we’re going down the road in our own life and we hit something catastrophic, or we hit a bump in our road, something that’s turned our life upside down, something just came out of nowhere and kind of rerouted our route, what comes out of us? What do the people around us see? Is it anger? Is it cursing? Is it resentment? Is it bitterness? Is it jealousy? What is it that people see? Because Scripture says in Matthew, “*For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*”

And I was just on the phone with a dear friend of ours and he has cancer. And it’s amazing, every time I get off the phone with he and his wife, they’re just joyful. They’re filled with joy. That he talks about even in these moments going to the doctors and to the appointments, these are opportunities to tell the nurse and the doctors about Jesus and that often they think something’s wrong with him because he’s filled with so much joy in these moments.

I think we can all learn a little bit from our friend, Buddy the Elf. I got an older group in here, so I don’t know if you know who Buddy the Elf is. Maybe you got grandchildren and you’ve watched the Christmas classic *Elf*. But he says the best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing ... [Audience Response] Thank you, you got it, is singing for all to hear. And we are to be singing so loud in this dark world that we’re in. That *that’s* how we stand out in this dark world is that we sing the praises of God. We sing His goodness. We tell people about it. You smile, you have joy. When you’re in that serve—or you’re at a restaurant and that service industry doesn’t have a smile, you praise God, that the world is to see that. That’s how we’re to stick out in this world.

She sang from an eternal perspective. She sang not because of certainty of the coming of days but the certainty of God’s grace. She sang with the confidence of the might of who her God was and that she was able to sing with strength. One of my favorite Bible verses is in Daniel chapter 11. It says, “Those who know their God will be able to stand in strength and take action.” First, we have to know who God is to

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be able to stand in strength and take action, and in the world that we’re living in and the culture that we’re facing, we have to be able to take action. We’re going to have to be able to stand in strength. But first, Scripture says in Daniel chapter 11 that we have to know who God is. Mary—for her to be able to sing those praises, she knew who her God was. Why? Because she had hidden God’s Word in her heart. And I think often we tend to—we have this picture, this image of Mary sometimes that we’ve seen—Oh, we don’t have a nativity.—Well there’s a nativity out there and she might be kind of meek and mild and very delicate, and I think just quite the opposite of her. I think she was a tough lady. She had to be for what she endured. She was full of grace. She was, of course, full of truth, but she just had this, like, grit with her.

And I often want to encourage women—because sometimes when you can be in women’s ministry or you go to women’s events, that sometimes we can tend to bond over our traumas and kind of our weaknesses. That sometimes I can go to these women’s events and everyone can be crying and emotional because life is hard. Life is hard. And we are to have women in our lives that we can go to, that we can talk about those issues with and those things that maybe we have in common, but we’re also as believers called to stand in strength, that we’re not to live in our anxiety and our depression and talk about the—we are to sing of His goodness. Because He has been so faithful when He sent His Son, Jesus, to this Earth for you and for me.

And a little side note, when I’m talking about we are supposed to have women—right after when Mary found out she was to give birth, she went to visit her relative Elizabeth. And Elizabeth, who was also expecting a miracle, Elizabeth encouraged her. We’re to have Titus 2 women in our lives. For the younger women in here, you need to find some older ladies you can learn from. And for the older ladies that are in here, don’t stop letting God use you in a mighty way. He’s got a purpose for you, and one of those purposes is investing into some young women, in your church, or in your community, in your family, to build that relationship with. Because it was, for Mary, it was after she went to go visit Elizabeth, and she received that like affirmation, that encouragement, *that’s* when Mary was able to sing, and to sing her song. Maybe somebody in your life needs encouragement, maybe you’re the one to do the encouraging. Maybe you need to go out and encourage somebody this Christmas, this holiday season, the year coming up.

But let me ask you, what happens when we don’t feel like singing? What happens when we don’t feel like praising God? I believe we have to do it out of obedience. We have to do it out of those disciplines in life, these disciplines that we’ve learned from her; we have to have disciplines in our life. Tammie Jo Shults—she was a Navy fighter pilot. She was also the pilot—I don’t know if you remember a few years ago, the Southwest air flight, something went wrong with the engine and a blade hit one of the windows and it decompressed, and she’s the woman pilot that safely landed the plane. But she says, Habits on a good day are our instincts on a bad day. That we have to have these disciplines in our life.

And as I just said, last year was a tough year for me. My heart can still be tender when I think about it. I struggled in all three of my pregnancies with partum depression. I don’t use ‘depression’ and ‘anxiety’ as two words to describe *me*, but

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that’s something that has come in all nine months of all three of my pregnancies. And yes, I do believe those words can tend to be overused in our culture, in our society, but for nine months, it’s a pretty dark time for me, especially with this third one. And it was a road that I had to walk by myself. And sometimes we’re called to walk. And I know that loneliness and isolation, those can be times of suffering, and especially at Christmas season, for some of us, that can be magnified. But even in my own home—I think of my poor husband and some of the things—he didn’t know how to handle me. He would just put his arm like this and be like, “What’s wrong with her?” [laughter] And it was for nine months and I would be quite embarrassed up here if I was to tell you some of the prayers that I would pray to God and the things that we would have to battle out; but God was faithful. Just because I didn’t think He was answering my prayers or maybe because I didn’t think He was near me, that doesn’t mean He wasn’t, that means often times He’s even closer than we think He is.

I felt so alone that there was a song, the “Breath of Heaven” that we sing often at Christmas. And for me, when I was sitting in that hospital room—because it’s amazing, as soon as I give birth, it’s gone. I’m OK. It’s, I’m a whole new person, a 180. It’s like that darkness has lifted. But before that, it said, “I’m waiting in a silent prayer,” and, “I’m frightened by the load I bear / In a world as cold as stone / Must I walk this path alone? / Be with me now.” And so, for those nine months, I didn’t feel like singing. I didn’t feel like praising, but I had to do it as a discipline and out of the obedience of my heart of who God was.

Ladies, when you don’t feel like opening up the Bible, you open it up out of obedience and you read it. When you don’t feel like praying, that’s when you get on your knees and you start praying. Even if you don’t have words to say, there’s sometimes like, “Lord, I’m here. I don’t know what to say, but I’m here with You and I’m in Your presence. Help me. I need You.” It’s like the song, “Lord, I Need You.” When you don’t feel like listening is when you turn on the worship songs and the hymns that we all know in our heart. *That’s* when you do it out of the obedience of your heart, and I *promise* you that He will meet you there; might not be in the instant we think and in the moment we think, but His promises are good. His faithfulness is good. Mary knew that. Mary knew it. She sang of His generational faithfulness. She kept her eyes focused on it.

After I was able to hold my little girl, I was able to sing, “Lighten my darkness / Pour over me your holiness / For you are holy / Breath of heaven.” And all her responses and all her disciplines of Mary that we learned from her, there was a peace in it all. Even with those questions that might have been rushing through her head at the time, there was a peace in her response and singing. She was able to sing because she carried the Prince of Peace. She carried Him physically, but we who believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior carry that peace spiritually. And when the angel showed up in the darkness of the night, they said that that peace was available to all of us. And you and I, we live in a world—there’s not a lot of peace it doesn’t seem like, but that’s been since the time He showed up until He comes again and we can have peace here on Earth and then one day we’ll have peace in eternity with Him.

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So I want to encourage you this Christmas season, if it’s been a year of struggle, that you have these disciplines in your life that can prepare you for that moment, to sing praises no matter what is going on in your life, that we can have the peace, the Prince of Peace, live in here. That in this dark world, that our light will pierce the darkness. Because whatever season you’re in, there’s a song for your season. And hopefully your song is a little bit more awe-inspiring than what I was in fourth grade. [laughter] That you will let God use your song that has to be fully submitted to Him, et go of control, so He can tell your story. Because like Mary, we have to sing with a laser focus of eternity. We have to sing with the hope of Heaven.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ, we have the hope of Heaven. That’s what separates us differently from this world. And I think so often as Christians, I believe our culture is for the here and the now; we don’t think much in the future. Like, I had Instacart deliver in 30 minutes, that’s about as far as I can get into the future. But our hope is in eternity, and we’re not teaching about that in church anymore. We’re not teaching about Heaven and the hope of Heaven, and *that’s* what gets us through the day. That’s what will get us through the suffering.

We sing with a life peacefully submitted out of obedience. We sing from a place knowing that God knows our own suffering—that Jesus Christ Himself suffered. And we sing from the only place you can, which is from giving your life to Jesus, having Him live and guide and speak and sing into your heart. Ladies, that we don’t have to sing a song of fear and discontentment; that doesn’t have to be our soundtrack, doesn’t have to be our soundtrack this Christmas season. We can sing a Christmas song all year long. It doesn’t have to start on Nov. 1 or Dec. 1.

And as we read in Scripture, Mary’s song, it’s called the “Magnificat.” It’s the Latin for “My soul magnifies the Lord.” And whatever you and I are going through, whatever the season we are in, we can always magnify the Lord, that that is our hope when Jesus came.

And as we close today, I want to pray. I want to pray with you. I want to spend time just reflecting. That maybe you are in a season of suffering and it has been difficult. You’re like me that has been wrestling back and forth with God. Maybe you didn’t know why you were coming here and somebody invited you. It was just one more thing to do on your to-do list. And maybe you don’t have that peace of Jesus. Maybe this world, and what’s happening in this world, the wars and the rumors of wars, it’s frightening to you. But that we can have a peace that the world cannot have, the world cannot give, but only Jesus can. And maybe you’ve just been battling something that you have to submit. You have to submit to God. You have to give Him full control so He can tell your story, so we can magnify Him all year long.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:42:23 Thank you all who have encouraged me this past year with *Fearless* and who have listened and even have shared with your friends and family. Many of you have sent me messages of encouragement and it means more to me than you’ll ever

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know. But, I also encourage you, as I shared in my message, The Cove is a very special place. It was the vision of my grandmother, Ruth Graham. And, to our family, most of us think that’s the most special place we can visit. So, I encourage you check out an event. It’s great for a weekend away with your spouse or with your friends. We have conferences throughout the entire year. Check it out: TheCove.org, and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

CLOSING MUSIC

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