



## Like Eve and Mary: The Story of Motherhood

By Kellen B. Winslow

### FAMILY MATTERS

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*What do Eve and Mary teach us about womanhood? Sacred purpose begins with choosing God's will in uncertainty.*

Most 60-year-olds want to think about retirement, not about how to pay the bills. My mother turned 60 the other day, yet my mother still works. She and my father have gone through multiple mid-life setbacks, forcing them to start anew several times. It didn't seem fair to me that a woman of her caliber would still have to struggle. But my mother doesn't seem phased—there she sat on her 60th birthday, smiling ear to ear, because she was surrounded by her children and grandchildren. Why was she smiling? In that moment, I could see her legacy as a woman, verifying the truth of something I have pondered for quite some time. I call it “The Story of Motherhood.”

The story consists of only two lines, spoken by two mothers living thousands of years apart. When they are combined, they tell a beautiful story, capturing the essence of motherhood. This is the story my mother told throughout her life: a story that has led her to live a life of true joy despite difficult circumstances.

Eve spoke the first line in the Garden when faced with a near-impossible decision: either remain with God, within the safety of the Garden, and with everything she has come to know and love, or make the choice that would allow her to become a mother. Did she yet know the fate of all mankind rested on that decision? Eve [asked](#), “Is there no other way?”

Another soon-to-be-mother who lived thousands of years in the future spoke the second line. One day, as the teenage girl drew water from a well, an angel came to her. He told her news that she would be a mother, but not just any mother, *the* mother—the mother of the Lord and Savior. This teenage girl, Mary, the expectant mother of Christ, [said](#), “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord.”

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Taken together, these two lines encompass the very nature and essence of motherhood. Eve and Mary’s lines put together illustrate the archetypal conversation symbolic of the interaction between every faithful mother and God. The woman, like Eve, asks, “Is there no other way?” God then responds. And regardless of God’s response, the woman replies with Mary’s words, “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord.”

The story of motherhood seems to be a story of submission, but not in the way many think, from a historical perspective. The historical story of female submission is one of being dominated or oppressed. However, celestial “submissiveness” is submission to God and His will ([Maxwell, 1990](#)). This is not about domination or authority; it is about self-actualization and the reaching of one’s divine potential. As [Elder Holland said](#),

Yours is the grand tradition of Eve, the mother of all the human family, the one who understood that she and Adam had to fall in order that “men [and women] might be” and that there would be joy. Yours is the grand tradition of Sarah and Rebekah and Rachel, without whom there could not have been those magnificent patriarchal promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ... Yours is the

grand tradition of ... the mothers of the 2,000 stripling warriors. Yours is the grand tradition of Mary, chosen and foreordained from before this world was, to conceive, carry, and bear the Son of God Himself. We thank all of you ... and tell you there is nothing more important in this world than participating so directly in the work and glory of God, in bringing to pass the mortality and earthly life of His daughters and sons, so that immortality and eternal life can come in those celestial realms on high.

... Yours is the work of salvation, and therefore you will be magnified, compensated, made more than you are and better than you have ever been ....

There are likely some women who do not feel this way, perhaps when doubting, discouraged, or disobedient. Whatever the matter, they can ask the Lord the same question our brave first mother asked, "Lord, is there no other way?" He will answer. And, whatever God's response, they can know that what God is asking them to go through is not only bringing to pass *their own* immortality and eternal life, but also preparing them to assist Him in bringing to pass the immortality and eternal life of *all mankind*. Symbolically, this is the same work as Eve and Mary. Whether a mother or not, that is the potential every woman holds; the potential men must honor in their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters. Once they understand this, they may find the courage and humility to respond, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord."

As I sat and watched my mother smiling, surrounded by her children and grandchildren, her image slowly faded away. I no longer saw my mother. I saw the embodiment of Eve, the mother of all living. She brought me into this world. She bore the burden of birth and blessed me with life. I also saw the embodiment of Mary, offering her children to the world. She raised us up, instilling a confidence and hope within us, as if we could save the world. I saw a woman who was reminded of all the times she had to ask, "Lord, is there no other way?" And there, just in front of her, was the result of all the times she responded to Him, "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord." Why was my mother smiling? Because she is a mother.

About the author

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