

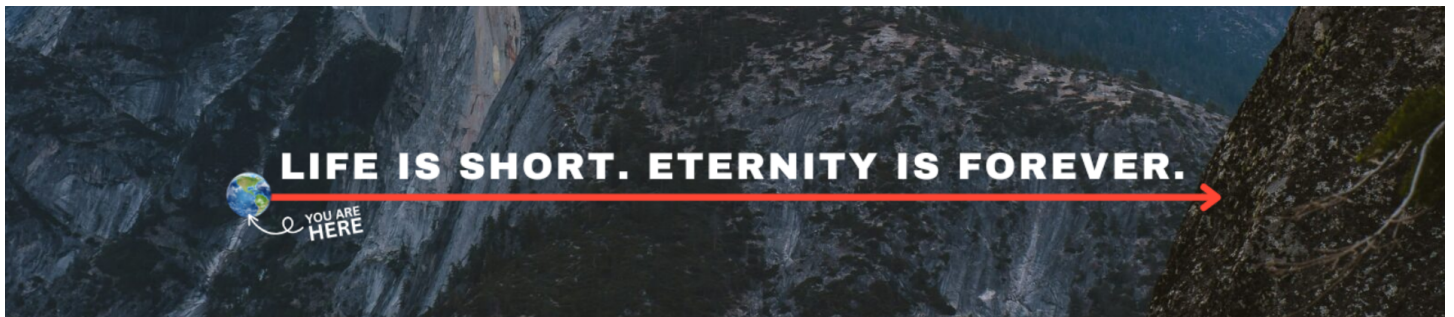
THINK ABOVE THE BOX

Bible Study Guide for Wanted-A Real Mother*

by Margaret W. Eggleston



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens



2 Corinthians 4:18 TLB So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven which we have not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.



Wanted-A Real Mother

Mary King sat before the dressing-table in her bedroom holding in her hand a string of beads—pearls they were, but they showed signs of much wear, and as Mary looked at them her eyes blazed with anger.

Tomorrow was her graduation day from High School. All day she had been at the class picnic and she had had such a glorious time. They had danced and played; they had rowed on the lake and sung their school songs in the moonlight. She had been as happy as a girl could be, and to have it spoiled in this way was cruel.

Why should her mother give her a string of old beads for a graduation present? Other girls had wrist watches and pretty dresses and checks and all sorts of beautiful things. When they asked her what her mother's gift had been, how could she say, "A string of old beads"? Mother would expect her to wear them at her graduation and how could she?

She had found them on her table when she had come into her room and with them was a note saying:

"DEAR MARY:

"I waited for you to come home so that I could give you my gift, but it is so late and I am too tired to wait longer, so I will leave them for you. I could not buy you a real gift, so I have given you the dearest thing I have. Every bead has a story which some day I will tell you—perhaps on the day that you graduate from college, but not now. I hope you will love them as I do. I shall see them to-morrow on your pretty new dress. Good night, girlie. I hope you had a good time.

"MOTHER."

Why was Mother so odd? All her life long it had been hard for Mary to have her mother so different. Her mother worked for Mr. Morse and so she could never bring her friends to their rooms lest she should annoy the Morses. Other girls' mothers had pretty faces and her mother's face was all red and cross-looking. Other girls' mothers had pretty hair, but her mother had straight hair and little of it. She had tried to get her to wear false hair, but instead of doing it her mother had gone to her room and cried because Mary had suggested it. Other girls' mothers let them wear pretty clothes, but hers were always plain, though they were always very neat. Most of the girls had fancy graduation dresses, but hers was only a little dimity [lightweight striped cotton fabric dress] that her mother had made—and now these dreadful beads were more than she could stand and she threw them on the bed in anger. She wished she had a real mother of whom she could be proud.

As she started to take down her long, wavy hair, she saw a letter in Mr. Morse's handwriting on her desk. Perhaps this was a check for her graduation present, so she hastily tore it open. But no check dropped out. Instead, there was a long letter, and she sat down to read.

"My dear Mary," it began. "A few days ago, I chanced to be on the beach when you were there with your friend, and I heard you say to her, 'I wish my mother were as beautiful as yours. Mother can't even go down the street with me for she drags her foot so that everybody turns and looks at us and it makes me feel so conspicuous. You must be very proud of your mother.' So I have decided that for your graduation gift, I shall give you a story instead of the check that I intended to give you. The check can wait."

"A story," said Mary to herself. "That is worse than the old beads. What a house of strange people this is! Anyway, I am curious to see what sort of a story he could write." So she read on.

"Seventeen years ago there came to a town in the eastern part of Pennsylvania a young man and his bride. Just a slip of a girl she was, but her face was full of sunshine and every one soon loved her. She had beautiful wavy hair and bright, blue eyes and a cheery smile. After they had been there for a while, their story came to be known, for his father was the great mill owner in a near-by town. When the young man had married the High School girl instead of the wealthy one whom the father had chosen for him, there had been a lot of

trouble and the young man had been told to leave home with his bride and expect no more help from the father.

"Now the young man had never worked, so it was very hard for him, but she also worked and, little by little, they bought the things needed in the tiny home on the hill, and they were very happy. Then, one day, a scaffold fell and they brought the young husband to the little wife all bruised and bleeding, and that very night a tiny girl came to the home to live. The neighbors helped all they could, but in a few days the father of the baby was gone, and the little girl-wife was left alone to care for the baby.

"When the mill owner heard of the death of the son and the birth of the little girl, he sent a note to the mother and said: 'We will take the little girl and bring it up as our own if you will give it to us and have no more to do with it.' But the brave little woman sent back her answer, 'As long as I have a mind with which to think and two hands with which to work, I can and will support my little girl. I thank you for your offer, but I love my baby too much to accept it.'

"But it was a hard pull. She worked in an office; she worked on a farm. Then a position was offered her as a teacher in a Home for Little Children. Here she could have her own room and keep the baby with her when she was not teaching. And while she was teaching, it would be cared for with the rest. Gladly the mother took the position and for more than a year she was very, very happy.

"One night when the baby was nearly three years old, she sat reading in the parlor of the home when someone called, 'Fire! Fire! Fire in the left wing!' Oh! that was where her baby was, on the very top floor. Like a bird she flew across the hall where the smoke already was pouring out. Up the first flight, choking, she went. Up the second. Then she had to fall to the floor to creep along. She could see the fire. It was on the fourth floor where her Mary was. Could she ever reach it? Would the fire block her way?

"Ten minutes after the call of fire had been given, the workers saw someone staggering through the lower hall. In her arms she carried a bundle wrapped tightly in a bed-quilt. And dangling from her hands was a long string of beads. Her face was burned. There was no hair on her head. She was writhing in agony, but she reached the door, handed the burden to a worker, saying quietly, 'I am badly burned, but I have saved my two treasures. Keep them safe for me.' Then she fell in a heap on the floor.

"For months and months and months she tossed on a bed of pain. No one thought she could possibly live. But she did, for she was living for her baby. When at last she came from the hospital, her beautiful face was scarred and red; only in spots had the hair grown; her hands were stiff and painful, and one leg dragged as she walked. But she was alive, and that was all she asked.

"While she had been ill, I had gone to see the mill owner to ask for help for the brave little woman who had shown us all what a heroine she was. But his answer had been, 'She took my son from me and I will have nothing to do with her. If she will give the child to me, I will bring it up in luxury, but I will not have her here.'

"So when she was ready to go back to work, I told her that another offer had come from the grandfather of the child to adopt it and I said to her, 'Don't you feel that you had better give them the baby?'

"For an answer, she patted the curly head and said, 'If I can fight death for my baby, I can conquer in the fight to live. I shall keep her. You may tell him that the child will not live in luxury but that she shall know no want, and she shall have both the education and culture which befits her father's child.'

"But the mother's heart was sore when she looked in the glass and saw what a pitiful change had come to her pretty face. 'I am so glad it came while Mary was little,' she said. 'Had it come later, she would have minded my ugly face. Now she knows no better and she will grow used to it.'

"So she was glad when I offered to have her come to live with us in the distant city where none had known of her or of the awful fight she was planning to make. We had taken a large house and there were many things the mother could do with her stiff hands which gradually, because of the long hours she spent on them, were beginning to limber a bit. I gave her rooms for herself and the child and there she lived, keeping away from all so that none might see her shrunken, changed body. She lived only for the child, hoarding carefully the little money that she could save lest there be not enough to send her to college when the High School should be over.

"Often have I heard her praying for strength to fight through the battle; often have I heard her pray that the little girl should grow to be an honor to the family who would not help her; often have I begged her to let me tell the child the story of the days that had gone, but her answer was always the same, 'No. Let her live the happy, care-free life. Some day I will tell her, but not now. It would kill me to have her pity me. She must love me for myself and not for what I did. My only happiness is to live and work for her.'

"So the heroine has spent the last fifteen years and to my way of thinking she is a mother of whom you may be proud.

"She must never know I have told you. But not for the world would I have you add to her burden by thinking she was not all that you wanted your mother to be.

"Sincerely,

"A. E. MORSE."

When Mary had finished the letter, she sat as one stunned. Her mind seemed on fire. Mechanically she picked up the pearls that she had thrown on the bed. Her mother had carried them with her through that awful fire. They were one of her two treasures and now she had almost said she would not wear them. Oh, what a selfish girl she had been! She had thought only of herself.

Once she had asked her mother why the scar was upon her face and she had answered, "Just an accident, child, when I was a young woman." Then she went and talked of something else. The lame foot, the misshapen hands, the red face, the queer little knot of hair—all were the price paid for her own life. Every minute since she was born, she had been a burden to her mother.

Now she understood why the little bank account which she had accidentally found was being so carefully saved. She had not known that she was to go to college.

Now she remembered that it had been years since mother had had a new dress, but she had thought it was because she was a bit strange. There had been many days when mother had seemed cross—was it because she was suffering? Oh, how sorry she was! What could she do to make her happy now that she knew?

Slowly she undressed for bed. She must be in the dark to think. When she knelt in prayer, she asked God to forgive her—but she remembered that she could not ask mother to do so. She remembered the words of her mother to Mr. Morse,

“It would kill me to have her feel sorry for me. She must love me for myself and not for what I did.”

So she tossed and tumbled as the time slipped by. Suddenly she heard a foot dragging across the hall, and a big lump came into her throat. How often she had rebelled at that foot! Then her mother came quietly into the room.

“Mother,” said Mary, “why are you here? Aren’t you asleep yet?”

“No, dear,” said the mother, and the girl thought she had never heard a more beautiful voice. “I heard you tossing in the bed and I thought perhaps you were ill. So I came to see. What is the trouble, dear?”

“Oh, to-morrow is my graduation day and I think I am sorry to leave school,” said the girl. “I love these dear little beads which I have under the pillow, mother. Have you had them long? I never saw them before.”

“Many, many years, girlie. Your father gave them to me and how hard he worked to earn them! I love every little bead on the string. But I shall love to see you wear them for his sake. I saved them for you once long ago because I wanted you to have something that he had earned for us. And now you must go to sleep, for you must look bright and pretty tomorrow. Oh! I shall be so proud of you when you leave for the school.”

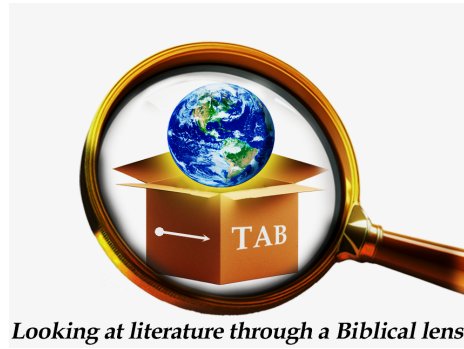
Then a white arm drew the mother down close to the bed and a sweet girlish voice said,

“Be all ready when the carriage comes for me tomorrow, Mother dear, for you are going with me, even though it is early. No other girl has a mother who has worked so hard as you have to keep her in school. You are the best mother in the whole world and I am so proud of you.”

“Well, if you are as proud of me as I am of you, we are the happiest little family in the whole world,” said the mother, kissing her on both cheeks. And two people were happy because real love was there.

The End

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Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

1. After a bright, wonderful day of playing, dancing, boating, and singing at her class picnic, Mary came home to a note and a string of dingy pearls, which reversed her happy mood to one of anger. She was horrified that her mother would expect her to wear them the next day at the graduation ceremony. What appeared as an ugly, embarrassing gift to Mary was really representative of amazing self-sacrificial love that she would soon learn of in Mr. Morse's letter, but until that revelation, she was *enraged*.

Matthew 7:1-2 AMP "Do not judge *and* criticize *and* condemn [others unfairly with an attitude of self-righteous superiority as though assuming the office of a judge], so that you will not be judged [unfairly]. For just as you [hypocritically] judge others [when you are sinful and unrepentant], so will you be judged; and in accordance with your standard of measure [used to pass out judgment], judgment will be measured to you."

How dare her mother expect her to wear that humiliating necklace? Did you know that some people treat the good news of the Gospel the same way Mary reacted to those dingy pearls?

Matthew 7:6 GNT "Do not give what is holy to dogs—they will only turn and attack you. Do not throw your pearls in front of pigs—they will only trample them underfoot."

Listen and then read the commentary in the link below:

*"When people not only reject the gospel, but insist on mocking and reviling it, we are not to waste God's **holy** Word and the precious **pearls** of His truth in a futile and frustrating attempt to win them. We are to leave them to the Lord, trusting that somehow His Spirit can penetrate their hearts-as He apparently did with some of those who at first rejected the preaching of Paul and the other apostles-or leaving them to the just judgment of God."* - John MacArthur

Casting Pearls before Swine

"Cherish them always! / They are from the Lord! / An eternal gift! / Made to be adored!... / They are from the Lord! / Protect the treasure! / Guard the Holy Word!" - **Jesus Our Cornerstone**



▶ Pearls Before Swine | Christian Rock Song 



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box: Have you ever experienced someone acting “*swinish*” upon hearing the Gospel? How did you respond? As aggravating and hurtful as it may feel to you, don’t forget to pray that God would open their hearts!

PS: Yes, *swinish* is a real word - see [SWINISH Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#).

2. *“Why should her mother give her a string of old beads for a graduation present? Other girls had wrist watches and pretty dresses and checks and all sorts of beautiful things. When they asked her what her mother’s gift had been, how could she say, ‘A string of old beads’? Mother would expect her to wear them at her graduation and how could she?”*

Sounds like Mary has been attacked by the green-eyed monster, otherwise known as jealousy and envy! But aren’t they basically the same thing? And what does God have to say about them?

Proverbs 14:30 ESV A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.

1 Corinthians 13:4 AMPC Love endures long *and* is patient and kind; love never is envious *nor* boils over with jealousy, is not boastful *or* vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily.

*“**Envy and jealousy** are closely related and sometimes used interchangeably in modern Bible translations, but they are not quite synonymous. Envy is a reaction to lacking something that another person possesses. Jealousy is a reaction to the fear or threat of losing something, or often someone, we possess. Envy is the distress or resentment we feel when others have what we have not. Jealousy is the sense of dread or suspicion we feel when what we have might be taken away.”*

- [GotQuestions](#)

[What does the Bible say about envy? | GotQuestions.org](#)

But in the Bible, it says God is a *jealous* God. Wait, what? That’s weird!

Exodus 20:4-6 NLT “You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the LORD your God, am a **jealous** God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.”
[emphasis added]

“God is speaking of people making idols and bowing down and worshiping those idols instead of giving God the worship that belongs to Him alone. God is possessive of the worship and service that belong to Him. It is a sin (as God points out in this commandment) to worship or serve anything other than God.”

- [GotQuestions](#)

[Why is God a jealous God? | GotQuestions.org](#)

"Through this life everyday You've chased me / Like a treasure underneath the sea / When hope was gone, Jesus, You came running / To the ends of the earth for me / 'Cause You're a jealous God, You're a jealous God / You are a jealous God for me / And nothing else has ever felt this real to me / You're a jealous God / You're beautiful and furious / I tremble at the thought of this / That You would go to Calvary / How deep Your love must be for me ..."

- Mark Stuart and Will McGinniss



[Know Hope Collective - Jealous God](#)

EXTRA CREDIT: Where did the phrase "*green-eyed monster*" come from? Check the link below and impress your friends with your vast *Shakespearean* knowledge!

[10 Phrases Invented by Shakespeare | Merriam-Webster](#)

3. Mary seemed to be wallowing in self-pity in addition to her anger at her mother and her envy of the other girls and their "perfect" mothers.

"Why was Mother so odd? All her life long it had been hard for Mary to have her mother so different. Her mother worked for Mr. Morse and so she could never bring her friends to their rooms lest she should annoy the Morses. Other girls' mothers had pretty faces and her mother's face was all red and cross-looking. Other girls' mothers had pretty hair, but her mother had straight hair and little of it. She had tried to get her to wear false hair, but instead of doing it her mother had gone to her room and cried because Mary had suggested it."

James 2:1-5 **ESV** My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?

1 Samuel 16:7 **GNT** But the LORD said to him, "Pay no attention to how tall and handsome he is. I have rejected him, because I do not judge as people judge. They look at the outward appearance, but I look at the heart."

John 7:24 **NIV** Stop judging by mere appearances, but instead judge correctly.

Looks like our leading lady needs to do some soul searching! To pile on more enlightenment (you could call it *guilt*), Mr. Morse's letter stated:

"A few days ago, I chanced to be on the beach when you were there with your friend, and I heard you say to her, 'I wish my mother were as beautiful as yours. Mother can't even go down the street with me for she drags her foot so that everybody turns and looks at us and it makes me feel so conspicuous.'"

Ouch! That's gotta sting!

Matthew 15:11 TLB You aren't made unholy by eating nonkosher food! It is what you *say* and *think* that makes you unclean.

Luke 6:37 AMP "Do not judge [others self-righteously], and you will not be judged; do not condemn [others when you are guilty and unrepentant], and you will not be condemned [for your hypocrisy]; pardon [others when they truly repent and change], and you will be pardoned [when you truly repent and change].

"Making a snap judgment based on appearance often works -- but not always. And the exceptions can really cost you. The world teaches us to judge people by their appearance. But God doesn't judge people by how they look -- and neither should we."

- **A Bible Devotion**

Don't Judge By Appearance

*"They say don't judge a book by its cover. Well, how else do you judge it? We do it all the time. We rate people based on their clothing, career, cars, houses, and even social media feed. But does God? Thankfully, He has a better system which goes beyond outer appearances...Judging people based on superficial considerations is never an accurate indicator of whether someone will be faithful to God. Why? Because a person's actions flow from their **heart**: The seat of their emotions, their thoughts, their will, their intentions. The heart is more important than looks when it comes to choosing people for God's assignments."* [emphasis added]

- Marvin Williams

Does Appearance Matter to God? - Daily Devotion

There is someone in the Bible who was also judged by His appearance and suffered greatly for it. Can you guess who this is?

Isaiah 52:14 NIV Just as there were many who were appalled at him— his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness—

Isaiah 53:2-3 AMP For He [the Servant of God] grew up before Him like a tender shoot (plant), And like a root out of dry ground; He has no *stately* form or *majestic* splendor that we would look at Him, Nor [handsome] appearance that we would be attracted to Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows *and* pain and acquainted with grief; And like One from whom men hide their faces. He was despised, and we did not appreciate His worth *or* esteem Him.

Isaiah 53:7-10 TLB He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he never said a word. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he stood silent before the ones condemning him. From prison and trial they led him away to his death. But who among the people of that day realized it was their sins that he was dying for—that he was suffering their punishment? He was buried like a criminal, but in a rich man's grave; but he had done no wrong and had never spoken an evil word. But it was the Lord's good plan to bruise him and fill him with grief. However, when his soul has been made an offering for sin, then he shall have a multitude of children, many heirs. He shall live again, and God's program shall prosper in his hands.

Psalms 22:6-7 ERV But I feel like a worm, less than human! People insult me and look down on me. Everyone who sees me makes fun of me. They shake their heads and stick out their tongues at me.

John 1:11 TLB Even in his own land and among his own people, the Jews, he was not accepted. Only a few would welcome and receive him. But to all who received him, he gave the right to become children of God. All they needed to do was to trust him to save them.

Did you ever wonder why the Pharisees judged Jesus to be a mere charlatan and a fraud, faking miracles and misleading the people? Jesus had no problem confronting them to their faces about their denial of Him! He is not only the Lamb of God, but the great Lion of Judah:

Matthew 23:23-25 AMP “Woe to you, [self-righteous] scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you give a tenth (tithe) of your mint and dill and cumin [focusing on minor matters], and have neglected the weightier [more important moral and spiritual] provisions of the Law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the [primary] things you ought to have done without neglecting the others. You [spiritually] blind guides, who strain out a gnat [consuming yourselves with miniscule matters] and swallow a camel [ignoring and violating God’s precepts]! “Woe to you, [self-righteous] scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of extortion *and* robbery and self-indulgence (unrestrained greed).

“Watch as Jesus confronts the Pharisees in this intense scene from The Chosen, highlighting the tension between Jesus and the religious leaders of His time.” - [The Sword of Jesus](#)

▶ **The Chosen: Pharisees and Jesus**

EXTRA CREDIT: Take a deeper dive into this subject here!

“They were scholars who had memorized vast portions of scripture. They were teachers who commanded respect in every synagogue. They were leaders who understood prophecy better than almost anyone in Israel. Yet, when the Messiah they claimed to be waiting for stood directly in front of them, performing miracles that fulfilled the very prophecies they had studied their entire lives, they rejected him. Not because they lacked evidence, not because they didn’t understand, but because accepting the truth would cost them everything they had built their lives around.” - [Bible Teaching](#)

▶ **Why the Pharisees Rejected Clear Evidence Despite Their Knowledge Explained**

4. *“‘A story,’ said Mary to herself. ‘That is worse than the old beads. What a house of strange people this is! Anyway, I am curious to see what sort of a story he could write.’ So she read on.”*

Mr. Morse’s long letter contained within it a story that was his gift to Mary, one more precious than she could ever have expected. It painted a very vivid picture of its characters and the message being sent to the reader, just as Jesus did when he would speak to the crowds in parables. So, what is a *parable*?

“A parable is, literally, something ‘cast alongside’ something else. Jesus’ parables were stories that were ‘cast alongside’ a truth in order to illustrate that truth. His parables were teaching aids and can be thought of as extended analogies or inspired comparisons. A common description of a parable is that it is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”

- [Got Questions](#)

[What is a parable? | GotQuestions.org](#)



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box: Do you think Mr. Morse's "parable" got the message through to Mary about her family's story? Did it "reveal the truth to those who wanted to know [Mary]..." as [Got Questions](#) puts it?

Has any of Jesus's parables hit home with you? If you are not sure, the following link lists them all. Time to take a walk through His garden of wisdom below!

"Jesus performed some amazing feats that the world had never seen (and hasn't seen since). But one of the most exciting things about His ministry was His teaching style. [Jesus taught using parables](#)—simple stories intended to impart a spiritual lesson. He's so identified with this teaching style that [Mark's Gospel](#) tells us that 'He did not say anything to them without using a parable' (Mark 4:34a.)"

- [Jesus Film Project](#)

[All the Parables of Jesus](#)

For our mellow, deep-diver types:

🎵 [The Parables of Jesus, told with the rhythm and passion of the Blues.](#)

PS: It's about 35 minutes long so give yourself **EXTRA CREDIT!**

Here's the tracklist:

1. Matthew 22.1-14 — The Wedding Banquet Blues **00:00**
2. Luke 21.29-31 — The Fig Tree Parable Blues **03:04**
3. Matthew 25.1-13 — The Ten Virgins Blues **06:21**
4. Matthew 25.14-30 — The Talents Blues **09:53**
5. Luke 12.35-40 — The Watchful Servants Blues **14:00**
6. Luke 10.25-37 — The Good Samaritan Blues **16:33**
7. Luke 11.5-8 — The Friend at Midnight Blues **20:12**
8. Luke 12.16-21 — The Rich Fool Blues **23:44**
9. Luke 13.6-9 — The Barren Fig Tree Blues **27:44**
10. Luke 12.42-48 — The Faithful and Wise Servant Blues **32:03**

5. Mr. Morse wrote, *"When the young man had married the High School girl instead of the wealthy one whom the father had chosen for him, there had been a lot of trouble and the young man had been told to leave home with his bride and expect no more help from the father. Now the young man had never worked, so it was very hard for him, but she also worked and, little by little, they bought the things needed in the tiny home on the hill, and they were very happy."*

Having been cut off from his wealthy father, the husband sacrificed by accepting a dangerous job. He gave up a life of riches and ease to be with the woman he loved, no matter the consequences.

"It can be easy to forget just how sacred marriage is. The truth is that marriage was created by God and it is incredibly important to Him. It cannot and should not be discarded or treated lightly. Because marriage is so sacred to God, there are many Bible verses about marriage. Within the pages of Scripture, you'll find the secrets to a joyful, God-honoring marriage."

- [Love Worth Finding Ministries](#)

8 Encouraging Bible Verses About Marriage

On the same day as the untimely death of her young husband, the wife gave birth. Time passed and the young mother did whatever she could to provide for herself and her baby. Then one night,

"...when the baby was nearly three years old, she sat reading in the parlor of the home when someone called, 'Fire! Fire! Fire in the left wing!' Oh! that was where her baby was, on the very top floor. Like a bird she flew across the hall where the smoke already was pouring out. Up the first flight, choking, she went. Up the second. Then she had to fall to the floor to creep along. She could see the fire. It was on the fourth floor where her Mary was. Could she ever reach it? Would the fire block her way?

Ten minutes after the call of fire had been given, the workers saw someone staggering through the lower hall. In her arms she carried a bundle wrapped tightly in a bed-quilt. And dangling from her hands was a long string of beads. Her face was burned. There was no hair on her head. She was writhing in agony, but she reached the door, handed the burden to a worker, saying quietly, 'I am badly burned, but I have saved my two treasures. Keep them safely for me.' Then she fell in a heap on the floor."

It doesn't get much more self-sacrificial than what this young woman did to save her child, sustaining injuries that would cause her suffering for the rest of her life.

John 15:12-13 TLB "I demand that you love each other as much as I love you. And here is how to measure it—the greatest love is shown when a person lays down his life for his friends;"

Both the people in Mr. Morse's letter gave all of themselves to their family with self-sacrificial love, just as Jesus did for us.

John 3:16 NIV For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Mark 10:45 GW It's the same way with the Son of Man. He didn't come so that others could serve him. He came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many people.

Philippians 2:6-8 ERV He was like God in every way, but he did not think that his being equal with God was something to use for his own benefit. Instead, he gave up everything, even his place with God. He accepted the role of a servant, appearing in human form. During his life as a man, he humbled himself by being fully obedient to God, even when that caused his death—death on a cross.

Romans 5:18 NLT Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.

Revelation 5:9 NIV And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

You might be thinking, "I understand how the husband dies trying to earn a living and how the wife almost died saving their baby in the fire, but what does Jesus dying over 2000 years before I was born have to do with *me*?"

"Jesus didn't go to the cross kicking and screaming, proclaiming his innocence and crying out at the injustice of the situation; he didn't go to the cross reluctantly or angrily or with clenched fists. He went willingly, with open arms because He knew there was no other way of securing our salvation. That's how much he loves us." - R. Ian Seymour

How can one man's death on a cross 2000 years ago possibly affect me?

Note: the above link is a long but worthy read. Don't miss it!

"God loves you and the Bible says that God sent his son from heaven to this earth for you. Jesus Christ came to this earth to take your sins upon a cross and he would have died had you been the only person in the whole world. He loves you, don't ever forget he loves, loves, loves, loves you!"
- Rev. Billy Graham

God so loved the World

"He is jealous for me / Love's like a hurricane, I am a tree / Bending beneath the weight of His wind and mercy / When all of a sudden / I am unaware of these afflictions eclipsed by glory / And I realize just how beautiful You are / And how great Your affections are for me."
- John Mark McMillan



David Crowder Band - How He Loves Us (Slideshow + Lyrics)

EXTRA CREDIT: Below is a story about another mother that sacrificed herself for her children, which is symbolic of how God's love is always there to protect us, no matter what the cost.

Psalm 57:1 NLT Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy! I look to you for protection. I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings until the danger passes by.

Psalm 36:5-7 AMP Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, your justice like the great deep. You, LORD, preserve both people and animals. How priceless is your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

"Psalm 91:4 NKJV says, *"He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge."* God's heart has always been to cover, protect, and preserve His children—even at great cost to Himself. Nowhere is that more clearly seen than at the cross."
- **Timothy Burt**

Beneath His Wings

6. The story mentions the father of the young man and how he cut his son off because he didn't approve of his choice for a wife. Later, after the young man's tragic death, he offered to take the child (his granddaughter) to raise but **only** if her mother had no more contact with her. The grandmother was also involved in the plan.

"We will take the little girl and bring it up as our own if you will give it to us and have no more to do with it."
[emphasis added]

Even after the horrible fire, the grandfather again wanted his granddaughter, also under the same conditions as before.

"While she had been ill, I had gone to see the mill owner to ask for help for the brave little woman who had shown us all what a heroine she was. But his answer had been, 'She took my son from me and I will have nothing to do with her. If she will give the child to me, I will bring it up in luxury, but I will not have her here.'"

What a pitiful, spiteful man, holding all his bitterness against the woman his son loved so much! Think of all the sadness experienced by himself and his daughter-in-law, not to mention the child never growing up with her grandfather. We are not told if the grandmother was in agreement with this, if not, imagine what sorrow she also went through. Her husband lost so much and gained nothing but continued anger and grief. This is what spite does to a person. By cutting his daughter-in-law out of his life, he (and his wife) lost years of loving and nurturing his granddaughter and the young woman their son adored.

Proverbs 26:27 ERV Whoever digs a pit can fall into it. Whoever rolls a large stone can be crushed by it.

Ephesians 4:31-32 NIV Never be bitter, angry, or mad. Never shout angrily or say things to hurt others. Never do anything evil. Be kind and loving to each other. Forgive each other the same as God forgave you through Christ.

"The term 'spiteful' refers to a disposition characterized by malice, vindictiveness, or a desire to harm others. In the context of the Bible, spitefulness is considered a sinful attitude that is contrary to the teachings of love, forgiveness, and kindness that are central to Christian doctrine.

- **Bible Hub**

Topical Bible: Spiteful

Wouldn't it be a blessing if more people like the grandfather above repented of their actions and asked for forgiveness from God and the people they've hurt?

Luke 5:32 AMP I did not come to call the [self-proclaimed] righteous [who see no need to repent], but sinners to repentance [to change their old way of thinking, to turn from sin and to seek God and His righteousness]."

What does the Bible say about repentance? | GotQuestions.org

Good 'ol Gramps should be singing the following song!

"I regret the hours I have wasted and the pleasures I have tasted that You were never in. And I confess that though your love is in me, it doesn't always win me when competing with my sin. / And I repent, making no excuses. I repent no one else to blame. And I return to fall in love with Jesus. I bow down on my knees and I repent. / I lament the idols I've accepted, the commandments I've rejected to pursue my selfish end. And I confess I need You to revive me, put selfishness behind me and take up my cross again. / And I return to fall in love with Jesus. I bow down on my knees and I repent."

- Steve Green



▶ I Repent

7. Mary's mother was a prayer warrior, drawing strength from her faith in God to make it through another day of pain and loss.

Philippians 4:6-7 ESV Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Romans 12:12 AMP ...*constantly* rejoicing in hope [because of our confidence in Christ], steadfast *and* patient in distress, devoted to prayer [continually seeking wisdom, guidance, and strength],

Psalms 145:18 GW The LORD is near to everyone who prays to him, to every faithful person who prays to him.

"Often have I heard her praying for strength to fight through the battle; often have I heard her pray that the little girl should grow to be an honor to the family who would not help her; often have I begged her to let me tell the child the story of the days that had gone, but her answer was always the same, 'No. Let her live the happy, care-free life. Some day I will tell her, but not now. It would kill me to have her pity me. She must love me for myself and not for what I did. My only happiness is to live and work for her.'"

Philippians 4:13 AMP I can do all things [which He has called me to do] through Him who strengthens and empowers me [to fulfill His purpose—I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency; I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him who infuses me with inner strength and confident peace.]

In addition, she kept the secret of the cause of her condition from her daughter, wanting love, not pity from her. How does one keep the faith through such struggles? How can *you*? Answers below!

"The title 'prayer warrior' describes a Christian who has a strong affinity for and gifting in this area. Though all believers are called to pray, certain people turn to God more quickly and confidently in response to the ups and the downs of life. And they are willing to ask for others as well as themselves."

- Heather Adams

5 Steps to Become a Prayer Warrior | Bible Study Tools

"...We don't see her lonely nights of intercession / Or the tears she sheds with every whispered prayer / We may not see the secret things hidden in her heart / But the eyes of God are watching her with care. / She's a prayer warrior down on her knees / Wrestling with powers and principalities / Standing in the gap for others / For her sisters and her brothers / Reaching heaven with her heart. / And we'll never fully know the debt we owe her. / For we'll never know the evil we've been spared / The many nights she's crashed / Through Satan's strongholds / Reaching heaven with her prayer."

- Tanya Goodman Sykes, Michael Sykes & Claire Cloninger

🎵 PRAYER WARRIOR(LYRICS)



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box: *"...Each of them [the prayer warriors] made lifting up praises and concerns a priority and a habit that was as natural as breathing. They all ended up doing a unique kind of ministry in and beyond the church walls...God may be calling you to become more of a prayer warrior in your church or family. Ask Him to confirm that in your heart. Let Him change your spirit and shift your attitudes to align with Him. Then, be obedient to do your part in the process..."*

- Heather Adams

Ready for the challenge? Want to be a prayer warrior? Grab your armor and start praying!

EXTRA CREDIT: How about a war chant to get you going?

"We are legion of prayer warriors / standing firm in the name of Jesus. / Chains are broken, the darkness flees. / By His power we claim victory. / One voice, one heart, one holy fire. / We'll pray till heaven lifts us higher. / On battle lines of love, we stand. / United strong by God's own hand." - [Heart of Worship](#)

🎵 [We Are Legion of PRAYER WARRIORS | Powerful Warfare - Praise and Worship Song](#)

Are *you* ready to enlist?

8. Mr. Morse could have told his story to Mary many times to her face over the years, especially after overhearing her disrespect towards her mother at the beach, but chose the silent method of a letter to edify her. Sometimes, in our lives too, the Holy Spirit shouts to us and sometimes He *whispers*.

1 Kings 19:12 AMPC And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire [a sound of gentle stillness and] a still, small voice.

John 14:26 TLB But when the Father sends the Comforter instead of me—and by the Comforter I mean the Holy Spirit—he will teach you much, as well as remind you of everything I myself have told you.

"The Holy Spirit is a gentleman. He doesn't barge in. He doesn't shout to compete with our busyness. He doesn't demand our attention like the chaos of the world does. Instead, He speaks in gentle whispers. Subtle nudges. Soft reminders. He was given to us by Jesus, not as a taskmaster, but as a Comforter – one who comes alongside us to guide, teach, and speak peace into our weary hearts." - Pat Elsberry

[Hearing the Voice of God: The Gentle Whisper of the Holy Spirit - Wisdom Hunters](#)



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box: Have you ever heard that "still, soft voice" of the Holy Spirit?

"Today, make space. Carve out quiet time. Open your Bible. Take a deep breath and ask the Holy Spirit to speak. You don't have to strive—you just have to be still. His voice is gentle, but it carries peace, direction, and truth that our souls desperately need." - Pat Elsberry

Isaiah 30:21 NIV Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

9. After finishing Mr. Morse's letter and learning the real story of her family, Mary, for the first time in her life, saw her mother in a whole new light.

"When Mary had finished the letter, she sat as one stunned. Her mind seemed on fire. Mechanically she picked up the pearls that she had thrown on the bed. Her mother had carried them with her through that awful fire."

They were one of her two treasures and now she had almost said she would not wear them. Oh, what a selfish girl she had been! She had thought only of herself. [emphasis added]

Once she had asked her mother why the scar was upon her face and she had answered, "Just an accident, child, when I was a young woman." Then she went and talked of something else. The lame foot, the misshapen hands, the red face, the queer little knot of hair—all were the price paid for her own life. Every minute since she was born, she had been a burden to her mother."

The revelation given to her in the letter was upending her whole worldview. Her feelings of resentment and embarrassment towards her mother changed to ones of deep love and a strong desire to set things right and change her own behavior and attitude. Her vision had changed from one of revulsion to one of awe that this amazing, brave, sacrificial woman was her very own mother!

2 Corinthians 4:7 ESV But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

"'Mother,' said Mary, 'why are you here? Aren't you asleep yet?' 'No, dear,' said the mother, and the girl thought she had never heard a more beautiful voice. 'I heard you tossing in the bed and I thought perhaps you were ill. So I came to see. What is the trouble, dear?'"

Mary asks her mother about the beads and she tells her, *"Your father gave them to me and how hard he worked to earn them! I love every little bead on the string. But I shall love to see you wear them for his sake. I saved them for you once long ago because I wanted you to have something that he had earned for us."* Even Mary's father had worked and sacrificed for her and she had never known. What a revelation!

To make matters worse, the plan was for Mary to go to the graduation alone so her mother would not be seen. She would send her off in the morning when Mary left for school. After being fully "converted" by the new knowledge from Mr. Morse's letter, Mary repented from her old ways and said, *"Be all ready when the carriage comes for me to-morrow, Mother dear, for you are going with me, even though it is early. No other girl has a mother who has worked so hard as you have to keep her in school. You are the best mother in the whole world and I am so proud of you."*

What a happy ending to this little tale! Makes you think, doesn't it? As you read the following post, consider the ways that Mary's mother resembles, on a human level, what Jesus sacrificed for us, even though we are all unworthy.

Matthew 13:45-46 TLB "Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a pearl merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. He discovered a real bargain—a pearl of great value—and sold everything he owned to purchase it!"

"The Parable of the Pearl beautifully captures what it means to follow Jesus. It challenges us to reevaluate our priorities, encourages us in our spiritual walk, and reminds us of the incredible treasure we have in Christ. When we truly grasp its message, it can deeply change how we live, leading us to a richer, more fulfilling relationship with God." - Josiah Orange

What is The Parable of the Pearl?

JUST FOR FUN DEPARTMENT: Amazingly, children's songs and videos can get Biblical points across even to older people! Here's a catchy tune and video about the Pearl of Great Price:

"Jesus told a story of a merchant one day, / Searching for pearls in every way. / He found one pearl so precious and bright... / He sold everything to make it his right! / Jesus is the greatest prize, / Worth far more than all our eyes! / He is

worth our heart and life... / Following Jesus brings true delight! / Nothing on earth can ever compare, / To Jesus' love so strong and rare. / His Kingdom joy is worth the cost... / Nothing we give will ever be lost!" - [Lighthouse Kids Family](#)



▶ [The Pearl of Great Price! | Kids Christian Song with Moving Lyrics | Lighthouse Kids Family](#)



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box: While her sacrifice pales in comparison to that of Jesus, can you compare and contrast the actions and spirit of Mary's mother towards her child to the actions and spirit of Jesus toward His children?

Philippians 3:8 AMPC Yes, furthermore, I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord *and* of progressively becoming more deeply *and* intimately acquainted with Him [of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly]. For His sake I have lost everything and consider it all to be mere rubbish (refuse, dregs), in order that I may win (gain) Christ (the Anointed One)...

1 Peter 3:18 ERV Christ himself suffered when he died for you, and with that one death he paid for your sins. He was not guilty, but he died for people who are guilty. He did this to bring all of you to God. In his physical form he was killed, but he was made alive by the Spirit.

Mark 10:45 NIV "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

REAL LIFE: It's said that the Lord works in mysterious ways. The writer of *How He Loves Us*, from question 5, John Mark McMillan, tells the story behind the song.

Romans 8:28 NIV And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

"I was hesitant to post this one. I don't talk about it much anymore. It's painful, plus it was almost 20 years ago. Honestly, I planned all the other stories and didn't mean to share this one that night. Still, for some reason I guess the story wanted to be told. I'm glad I did. Hope it's meaningful for all of you who've been asking about it for years."

▶ [Story: How He Loves | John Mark McMillan | Stabal Session \(live\)](#)



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens

Think Above the Box: Now that you know the background story of how a few cast aside words added to musical notes became a very popular Christian praise song, read through the comments to see how this song has affected people (here and in the Crowder version above.) Don't ever think that some little thing you do in Jesus' name can't bring others closer to God.

APOLO-GET-ITS: Question: What can go from 1 single item to 30 trillion items in 270 days?
Answer: You!

Intrigued? See the link below:

"One of the greatest arguments for the existence of God is the human cell. Science is just beginning to unlock some of the mysteries of the cell but these tiny entities, possessing no intelligence, can perform amazingly complex functions in mere nanoseconds that leave our brightest scientists baffled as to their inner workings. "

- Curt Blattman

[Cellular Mysteries - Bible Apologetics - A DAILY DEVOTIONAL](#)

LOVE TO LINK!

The depth of content offered in the Think Above the Box Study Guides would not have been possible without the many talents and Spirit-inspired links that are included for each book. Isn't it great that while you use the study guides you can click on a link and go to these great sites without searching for them?

We would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to all the Bible publishers, pastors, bloggers, filmmakers, musicians and Christian media websites for the vast amount of information they provide online. Your efforts are truly a blessing to all who access your sites!

TAB highly encourages students to explore each of the links at their leisure as it is like going down a holy rabbit hole!

[Project Gutenberg](#)

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[Jesus Our Cornerstone](#)

[Merriam-Webster](#)

[GotQuestions](#)

[Integrity Worship](#)

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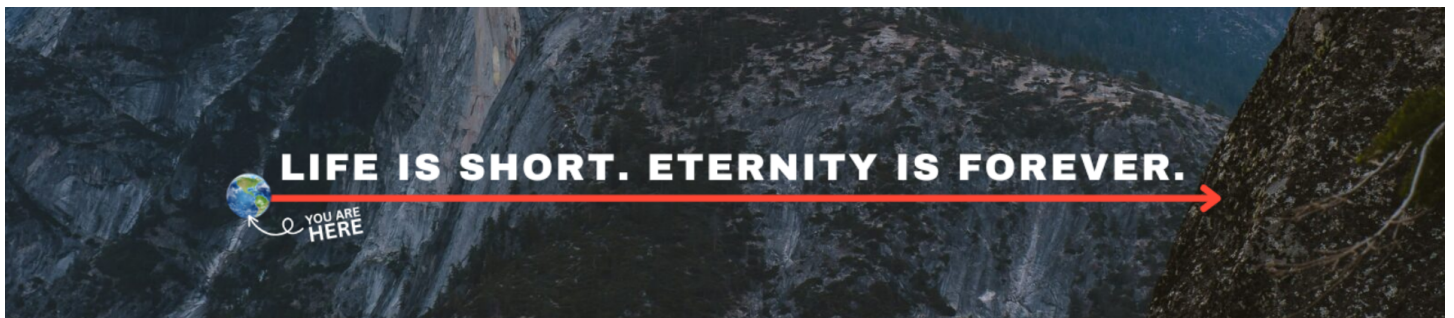
Afterword

Please check out [Think above the Box](#) for more study guides, blogs, and links to thought-provoking material.

*And please leave us a note on our site about your experience!
We would love to hear your comments!*



Looking at literature through a Biblical lens



2 Corinthians 4:18 TLB So we do not look at what we can see right now, the troubles all around us, but we look forward to the joys in heaven which we have not yet seen. The troubles will soon be over, but the joys to come will last forever.

