

YOU ARE NEEDED...

You don't have to be an elite athlete, boast a sky-high GPA, or be on a wildly successful career path. You *can* make the world better, right where you are. Today. Right now.

And for the rest of your life.

Take the case of an ordinary teenage girl, living an ordinary life. On what seemed like an ordinary day, an angel stopped by and told her about God's incredible plan to change the world. The angel asked her to be a part of the plan. Mary answered, "Yes," and the rest is history.

Now I know what you're thinking. Mary was...Mary. The Mother of God. The Queen of Heaven. Sure, but Mary was about your age when God called her to be a part of his plan. God calls you too. Remember, God has created you in his image. That means you are created to be good the way God is good. God calls you every day to help make this world the good and beautiful place he imagines for us. Every time you respond to God's call, you're helping God accomplish his incredible plan.

How can you do that? On these pages, you'll read about how Mary changed the world with small, simple acts—the same kinds of things you can do. You can "give it a try" with ideas for serving others through service organizations or on your own. Do some journaling, say a prayer, and then see how Mary can help you say "yes" to God every day. Remember, the world needs *you*.

So read on. Let's get started changing this old world today!

She was greatly troubled ...

Luke 1:29

How could Mary, that sweet girl in paintings and statues, ever be “troubled”? But it’s right there in black and white. And it tells us something. Mary knows that knot-in-your-stomach feeling we all get when we don’t understand what’s happening. Mary dealt with the same emotions we all feel: worry, pain, joy, and sadness. Mary was “troubled” when an angel greeted her—and who wouldn’t be? We can understand how Mary might have felt, and Mary understands how we feel when we’re stressed or unsure.

What troubles you? Is it something that’s happening to you? To a friend? Or is it something going on in the world? How is God calling you to change the world and make it a better place? Let Mary help. “Speak to Mary as you would to a mother,” says Pope Francis. “She is a good mother who listens to you and embraces you, who loves you, and walks together with you.”

GIVE IT A TRY...

The first—and maybe most effective—way to change the world is also the simplest. Just be a friend. Think about it: Friends listen. They’re compassionate and loyal. They put up with our faults. A good friend “walks together with you,” like Mary. If every person treated every other person on the planet as a true friend, we wouldn’t have poverty, war, or injustice. So change the world by being a friend—to everyone, including people you don’t really like. Remember what Jesus says: “Do to others whatever you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12).

JOT DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS...

Who do I know who needs a friend right now?

Remembering what Jesus says about treating others, how can I be a friend to everyone today?

SAY A PRAYER...

Mary, whenever I am troubled, confused, stressed, or scared, help me. Show me how to trust God the way you did. Help me say these words: “Jesus, I trust in you.” And Mary, you are my mom in heaven. Can you please remind me to repeat these words whenever I need help? Thanks!

Where does your prayer lead you?

WRITE ABOUT IT HERE.

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." *Luke 1:38*

In the novel *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood describes a dystopian society in which "handmaids" are assigned the role of bearing children for couples who can't conceive. Handmaids have no choice in their destiny.

When Mary declares herself the handmaid of the Lord, she makes the decision freely and thus makes a choice about her own destiny. That's one of many wonderful things about God. You can decide to say yes or no. God won't force you to do anything. But saying yes to God isn't a one-time answer. You say it every time you love others as God loves them. How do you do that? Take a tip from a man named Jean Vanier, who once said, "To love someone is to show to them their beauty, their worth, and their importance."

GIVE IT A TRY...

As late as the 1960s, people with developmental disabilities often lived in institutions. They had no choice. Jean Vanier, a philosopher and professor living in Paris, was horrified by these conditions. He invited two people with disabilities to live in his home with him. Thus began a movement known as L'Arche (French for "The Ark"). Today, in L'Arche communities all over the world, people with and without intellectual disabilities live and work together. Even if you don't feel called to serve in this way, it's worth a visit to the L'Arche website to get some inspiration and insight. Go to larcheusa.org.

JOT DOWN YOUR THOUGHTS...

Who do I know who is unaware of their beauty, worth, and importance? How can I help them see that?

Can I think of something that's holding me back from saying "yes" to God? How will I work on it?

SAY A PRAYER...

God, please just show me the beauty, worth, and importance that you see in me.

Where does your prayer lead you?

WRITE ABOUT IT HERE.
