

“Unbegrudged Blessings” - The Story of Mary and Elizabeth
Adapted from Amelie Wilmer

Additional questions to ponder:

1. Weems begins the chapter by mentioning how Jesus’ ministry challenged society’s restrictions upon women’s roles in the religious sphere. How has that actually played itself out in Christianity?
2. Do you think that the blessings these women received altered the way they saw themselves? What happens when the way the world sees us conflicts with the way we see ourselves? How is that a “mixed blessing?”
3. Each woman had to come to grips with the “irony of blessedness...that behind every blessing is a burden.” What do we know about the “irony of blessings?”

Consider the quote: “Some blessings we outgrow...”Others we grow too old to remember.”

1. What “disappointments” have you learned to live with?
2. Have you had an experience of being “given back” something that you long learned to let go of? What was your response? Were there mixed emotions?

After learning to live with “unanswered prayers” - how do you respond when they are answered, long overdue, at a time and in a way we hadn’t “planned?”

1. How do you receive something “you’ve stopped looking for?”
2. Weems imagines that Elizabeth experiences fear and bewilderment instead of joy and gladness. Can you see why?

There is a “second lesson” - and that is how to receive a blessing when it causes more problems than it solves as is the case with Mary.

1. “How can something be a blessing when it raises more questions than it answers?”
2. What is your experience with such blessings? Can you name a recent one?

What are the alternative ways that Elizabeth could have responded to Mary - she could have been jealous, could have quashed the young woman's confidence, invalidate her blessedness...

1. Can you think of opportunities you were given to uplift the giftedness, the promise, the possibilities of a younger woman, even if that meant taking the limelight off of your own achievements?
2. What does it mean to "begrudge a blessing?"
3. What is the opposite?
4. What is your experience of 'building on the strengths of the other' in a multi-generational context?