

HAVE YOU HEARD THE LATEST?

by Peggy A. Ford



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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Miriam

The ringleader, always eager to spread the latest rumor.
Makes snide remarks.

Anna

A “non-gossiper.” She just shares the facts.

Martha

“Shares information” under the guise of being helpful.
Mostly listens.

Rebekah

Somewhat skeptical, prone to cynical comments,
has a connection to Mary’s mother.

Sarah

Asks lots of questions, is soft-hearted.
Zealously searches for new information.

Deborah

A bit more removed from the goings-on.

References:

1. *NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI 1995.
2. Jack Hayford, *The Mary Miracle*, Regal Books, A Division of Gospel Light, Ventura, CA, 1994.
3. Kimberly Duncan Reisman, *The Christ-Centered Woman*, Upper Room Books, 2000.
4. Louis M. Savary, *The Life of Mary*, Regina Press, New York, 1985.

All Scripture is the author’s paraphrase.

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PRODUCTION NOTES

Introduction: Writing the play *Have You Heard the Latest?* was not my idea, but a blessing and a message from the Lord. After having spent the winter away from home, I was anxious to get back and write some Christian speeches, and the Lord knew of my anticipation. Very early one morning, I was conscious of the Lord wanting me to listen to him. His message was that he wanted me to write a presentation about Mary, the mother of Jesus, and write it from the perspective of the gossipers of her day. Although I felt inadequate about attempting to write it, he assured me he would write it through me, and he did. Never have I typed so fast as when I sat down to write *Have You Heard The Latest?* Under the Lord's direction the presentation was turned into a play, and I believe he was pleased.

Synopsis: The rumors are flying fast and furious around Nazareth about teenage Mary. Has she put on a little weight? She can't be pregnant! And what about those wild claims of an angel's visit? Surely she's making up stories! And her family? They think Mary's baby will be the Savior of the world. Talk about dysfunctional! The murmurings in the marketplace — like a game of “telephone” — follow Mary wherever she goes. It all seems too preposterous. What's fact and what's fiction? The story — starting with Jesus' birth and ending with his twelve-year-old visit to the temple — is revealed in “juicy tidbits” of gossip passed from one woman to another. Each new revelation builds on the one before it until a complete picture of the Christmas story emerges. This script is suitable for a women's ministry Christmas program or service.

Costumes: Robes, head coverings, and sandals, as were worn in Jesus' time here on earth.

Props: None are needed, but the women may carry baskets as if doing their marketing if desired.

Set: A bare stage is fine.

1 *(MIRIAM enters from Stage Left just as SARAH enters from*
2 *Stage Right.)*

3 **MIRIAM:** Sarah! How are you?

4 **SARAH:** Fine, thanks! I just thought I'd pick up a few
5 things from the market.

6 **MIRIAM:** *(Looks around, then, confidentially)* Have you heard
7 the stories going around about Anne and Joachim's
8 daughter, Mary?

9 **SARAH:** Why, no — do tell!

10 **MIRIAM:** Several of the women say they've noticed that
11 Mary is putting on weight, and it's all in her stomach.
12 Some are even saying that they think she's pregnant!
13 Now, you know *I* would never say such a thing, but
14 that's what the talk is. Oh, and her parents — you
15 know, Anne and Joachim — say the baby is going to
16 be our Messiah. All that, and she's only fourteen years
17 old!

18 **SARAH:** Miriam, are you sure she's pregnant? She's just a
19 teenager! She's probably making it up. She's awfully
20 young to be making up a story like that, though.

21 **MIRIAM:** I only know what I have heard, and it's from a
22 very reliable source. But wouldn't you think God would
23 choose someone with more clout? *(SARAH nods.)* Mary
24 says that one day shortly after her betrothal to Joseph,
25 while she was praying, an angel told her that God
26 chose her to be the mother of the Savior. Can you
27 imagine such a thing?

28 **SARAH:** Do you think it's really true?

29 **MIRIAM:** It's pure nonsense!

30 **SARAH:** I mean, I know she's a good girl and all, but it
31 seems like God would choose someone with a bit more
32 maturity and prestige.

33 **MIRIAM:** I hear you.

34 **SARAH:** I've got to get going, but keep me in the loop, OK?

35 **MIRIAM:** Definitely.

1 SARAH: I'll talk to you later, and in the meantime, I'm
2 going to see who else knows anything about this
3 absurd story. See ya, Miriam!

4 MIRIAM: 'Bye! (*SARAH exits. ANNA enters from Stage Right.*)
5 Hello, Anna!

6 ANNA: Hi, Miriam.

7 MIRIAM: Hey — have you heard about Mary?

8 ANNA: If you're talking about the stories making the
9 rounds about Mary giving birth to our Savior, then yes,
10 I have heard those stories.

11 MIRIAM: What do you think?

12 ANNA: I think they're just some gossipers' made-up stories.
13 Quite frankly, I have more important things to do than
14 listen to wild rumors about a young girl.

15 MIRIAM: But wait — there's more. I guess Mary told the
16 angel she didn't know how that could happen to her.
17 But according to my friends, the angel told Mary that
18 she shouldn't be afraid. (*REBEKAH enters.*)

19 REBEKAH: Hi there, Miriam. Hello, Anna. (*MIRIAM and
20 ANNA greet her.*) Hey, what are you two talking about?

21 ANNA: (*Crisply*) I'm through talking. I'll be on my way.
22 (*ANNA exits.*)

23 MIRIAM: We were talking about Mary, the daughter of
24 Anne and Joachim. We heard through the grapevine
25 that she's pregnant.

26 REBEKAH: No!

27 MIRIAM: Yep — and to top it off, she says the baby will be
28 the Savior of our people.

29 REBEKAH: Really?

30 MIRIAM: She even says she'll give birth to God's son
31 through the power of the Holy Spirit — and still remain
32 a virgin!

33 REBEKAH: I find *that* hard to believe. My guess is she'll
34 change her story soon — after all, she *is* just a child.
35 (*MIRIAM agrees.*) Maybe I'll go pay her mother, Anne, a

1 visit. She'll know what's going on. If I find out
2 anything, I'll let you know.

3 **MIRIAM:** OK, Rebekah. See you soon! (*REBEKAH exits Stage*
4 *Right. SARAH enters.*) Hi there, Sarah!

5 **SARAH:** Good morning, Miriam!

6 **MIRIAM:** Remember when we met the other day and I told
7 you about Anne and Joachim's daughter Mary, who's
8 with child?

9 **SARAH:** How could I forget?

10 **MIRIAM:** Well, there's more news. Mary told someone that
11 an angel said the baby was to be named Jesus. Wonder
12 why she made that name and story up?

13 **SARAH:** Who knows?

14 **MIRIAM:** According to my sources, Mary said, "Let it be
15 done to me just as you have said" (Luke 1:38). And just
16 like that (*Snaps fingers.*) she agreed to be Jesus' mother.
17 She agreed to be the mother of Jesus and remain a
18 virgin. Have you ever heard anything so twisted?

19 **SARAH:** Goodness, no. What an imagination!

20 **MIRIAM:** And her imagination is getting her into big
21 trouble. (*REBEKAH enters purposefully and strides up to*
22 *MIRIAM and SARAH.*)

23 **REBEKAH:** Hey there, Miriam and Sarah. This just keeps
24 getting more unbelievable. I talked to Mary's mother
25 Anne, and she says Mary confirmed that God told her
26 she would give birth to our Messiah. Anne said they
27 hugged each other and praised and thanked God for
28 remembering his people. Anne said she was thrilled to
29 know that her daughter's child — her grandchild —
30 would be the long-awaited Messiah. Boy, that family is
31 dysfunctional with a capital D. (*ALL nod in agreement.*)

32 **SARAH:** Mary, the mother of the Savior of the world? Their
33 family is nice and all, but they sure aren't prominent in
34 our community or anything.

35 **ANNA:** (*She has slipped in and caught SARAH's lines.*) There

1 you go, gossiping again. Don't you all have anything
2 better to do?

3 **MIRIAM:** Evidently you haven't heard the latest. Mary is
4 pregnant — supposedly with the Savior, you know — yet
5 she claims to still be a virgin!

6 **ANNA:** Quite frankly, I'm not interested in your gossip. If she
7 is pregnant but claims she's still a virgin, and even if she
8 says her baby will be the Savior of the world, then it
9 must be true. Mary's a good girl. She wouldn't say such
10 things if they weren't the truth.

11 **MIRIAM:** Time will tell.

12 **ANNA:** I need to hurry home. *(Starts to exit.)*

13 **MIRIAM:** *(Calls after her.)* You'll be the only one in the village
14 who doesn't know what's going on! *(Sighs.)* Some people!

15 **REBEKAH:** You know that Mary is betrothed to her cousin
16 Joseph, the carpenter — right?

17 **MIRIAM and SARAH:** Yes.

18 **REBEKAH:** I hear when Mary told Joseph she was pregnant,
19 he was not happy. After all, he knew it wasn't his baby!
20 Bet he wondered what was going on, like who was the
21 father? What had Mary been up to? How dumb does
22 Mary think he is?

23 **MIRIAM:** What are people going to say? "There goes Joseph
24 with that Mary girl. How can he stay with her, knowing
25 it isn't his baby?" What a fool! Anne told me Joseph loves
26 Mary so much that he wanted to believe her when she
27 said it was God's baby, but he just couldn't.

28 **REBEKAH:** Well, who could blame him? I heard Joseph
29 actually thought about breaking his engagement to Mary,
30 but he knew it would ruin her reputation. If he accused
31 Mary of carrying someone else's baby, she would be
32 punished by the law, and he didn't want that to happen.

33 **SARAH:** Very noble of him, I would say! *(ANNA and MARTHA*
34 *enter.)*

35 **MIRIAM:** Hey there, ladies! Come here — we need to fill you

1 all in on the Mary-Joseph situation.

2 ANNA: I'm pretty busy. I haven't even had time to go to the
3 market! Anyway, like I said, I'm not interested in any
4 gossip. (*ANNA exits.*)

5 REBEKAH: Miriam, you get Martha up to speed on what's
6 happening. I'll be back when I know more. (*REBEKAH
7 exits.*)

8 MARTHA: Go ahead, Miriam. I'm all ears!

9 MIRIAM: You see, Joseph decided that Mary should stay with
10 some relatives to have her baby. But he says the night
11 he made this decision, he had a dream. (*SARAH and
12 MARTHA murmur to each other in surprise.*) An angel
13 appeared to him and told him it was all right to wed
14 Mary because her child was really God's own son, the
15 Savior promised to our people.

16 SARAH: Can you imagine?

17 MIRIAM: Then the next morning Joseph hurried to tell
18 Mary about his dream. Apparently Anne and Joachim
19 were really relieved to see the two of them happy and
20 making marriage plans. Then they told Joseph's
21 parents about Mary's message from the angel and
22 Joseph's dream so his parents would understand why
23 they were going ahead with the marriage.

24 SARAH: That would take a lot of understanding. What's in
25 it for them?

26 MARTHA: Well, maybe, since the child is supposed to be the
27 Savior of the world, they're thinking it will improve
28 their standing in the community.

29 MIRIAM: Well, I have news for them — they will not be any
30 more respected with this foolish story they're telling
31 than they are now. Seems Joseph and his family are as
32 gullible as Mary and her family.

33 MARTHA: There's no doubt about that.

34 MIRIAM: (*Really getting fired up*) A dream! Well, we all have
35 dreams. Suppose I said an angel came in my dream and

1 brought me tons of money that would be heaped by my
 2 bedside when I woke up. Think I'll try that! Or how
 3 about a dream where a wonderful rich man comes into
 4 my life. (*Laughs.*) See you later when I have more news!
 5 Sweet dreams, everyone! (*MIRIAM exits.*)

6 **SARAH:** 'Bye! (*To herself, as she walks away, shaking her head*)
 7 It's hard to believe everything that woman says.
 8 Wonder if it is true? I should consider the source. But
 9 who knows? I wouldn't have thought of Mary as being
 10 the mother of the Savior. Hmmm. (*Exits. REBEKAH*
 11 *enters.*)

12 **REBEKAH:** Hey, Martha, I have big news! This story just
 13 keeps getting better. It's soon going to be obvious to
 14 everybody here in Nazareth that Mary is expecting. So
 15 now the issue is whether she should keep living with
 16 her parents, or if she should move in with Joseph's
 17 family, like girls usually do when they are betrothed.

18 **MARTHA:** What's she going to do?

19 **REBEKAH:** She decided to visit her cousin Elizabeth in the
 20 village of Ain Kerem, a few miles from Jerusalem.

21 **MARTHA:** Wow — so she's leaving her parents, huh?

22 **REBEKAH:** Well, for what it's worth, I say good riddance.
 23 She's a bad example for our daughters, don't you think?
 24 (*MARTHA nods. DEBORAH enters Stage Right as MIRIAM*
 25 *enters Stage Left.*)

26 **MIRIAM:** There goes Deborah. I need to spread the news.
 27 Deborah, come here! (*DEBORAH crosses to MIRIAM.*)
 28 The story about Mary just keeps getting bigger and
 29 bigger — just like her stomach! (*ALL laugh.*) You've
 30 heard about Mary being pregnant, haven't you?

31 **DEBORAH:** No, I haven't.

32 **MIRIAM:** Where have you been, girl? She's the talk of the
 33 town. She claims she is pregnant by the Holy Spirit,
 34 and the baby she's having will be the Savior of the
 35 world. Little shocking, isn't it?

1 **DEBORAH:** Indeed!

2 **REBEKAH:** You know, I heard Mary's parents are
3 concerned about her going to see her cousin Elizabeth.
4 She's only fourteen! Her parents would never allow her
5 to travel alone, so they're going with her.

6 **DEBORAH:** They're probably glad to get Mary out of
7 Nazareth, what with all the talk going on. Listen — I
8 must be moving along. Please keep me informed!

9 **MIRIAM:** I'll walk you out, Deborah. (*DEBORAH and*
10 *MIRIAM exit. ALL wave.*)

11 **REBEKAH:** (*To MARTHA*) My sources say that they heard
12 that Elizabeth claims the angel told Mary that Elizabeth
13 was also pregnant, even though she's too old to have a
14 baby.

15 **MARTHA:** "Too old" is certainly an understatement!
16 Everyone's going to think her son is her grandson!

17 **REBEKAH:** Well, one of them is too old and one is too
18 young. According to Anne's friends, they finally made
19 it to Elizabeth and John's place in the late afternoon
20 after a loooong journey. (*MIRIAM enters.*)

21 **MIRIAM:** You'll never guess what I found out. Mary and
22 Joseph are really getting married! (*REBEKAH and*
23 *MARTHA gasp.*) Can you imagine Mary walking down
24 the aisle out to here? (*Motions with hands indicating a*
25 *pregnant stomach.*) I heard the two of them will walk
26 together — probably just in case she trips and falls —
27 in a procession from her family's house to his family's
28 house. After the wedding there's a big dinner, and I
29 heard the party will last for hours.

30 **REBEKAH:** Wonder if Mary will dance? Now *that* would be
31 a sight! (*ALL laugh. ANNA enters.*)

32 **ANNA:** I've got some *real* news for you, ladies. The Roman
33 soldiers rode into Nazareth today to announce that
34 Caesar Augustus has ordered a population count of the
35 whole empire. (*ALL groan.*) Every man has to return to

1 the hometown of his tribe and be registered. Since
2 Joseph is from the tribe of Judah, he'll have to go to
3 Bethlehem to register and be taxed. Leave it to the
4 Romans to get the tax. I'll let you get back to your
5 chitchat now. (*ANNA exits.*)

6 **MIRIAM:** I heard that Mary is going along to Bethlehem,
7 even though she's about to pop. (*SARAH comes bursting*
8 *in.*)

9 **SARAH:** (*Breathlessly*) Listen up, everybody! Mary had her
10 baby boy, and — get this — he was born in a *stable!*
11 Joseph told his family he couldn't find a room to rent,
12 so they had to stay with the animals.

13 **REBEKAH:** A likely story — he probably just didn't want to
14 pay for a room.

15 **SARAH:** Since the baby was born so far away from home,
16 they have to stay in Bethlehem until Mary and the baby
17 are strong enough to travel.

18 **REBEKAH:** They're probably staying away so people won't
19 be figuring up how long they've been married and
20 realize the baby's been born too soon. Can't fool me!

21 **SARAH:** This is straight from the mouth of Mary's mother,
22 Anne. Shepherds came to visit the baby. They said a
23 choir of angels appeared to them during the night,
24 announcing that the Messiah was born in a stable.

25 **REBEKAH:** What a dream they must have had — sheep and
26 donkeys and camels — oh, my!

27 **SARAH:** Mary said that when they left, they proclaimed the
28 glory of God to all the people they met. Wonder what
29 *that* was all about?

30 **REBEKAH:** It's anybody's guess. Martha and I need to get
31 going. We'll talk to you soon. 'Bye! (*MARTHA and*
32 *REBEKAH exit. ALL wave or say good-bye. DEBORAH*
33 *enters.*)

34 **DEBORAH:** Listen, girls. Rumor has it that Mary and
35 Joseph went to the temple to present Jesus in the

1 customary fashion for firstborn Jewish boys. While
2 they were there, apparently a man named Simeon
3 walked up to Mary, blessed the baby, and asked to hold
4 him. Can you imagine handing your baby to a stranger
5 to hold?

6 **MIRIAM and SARAH:** (*Ad-lib*) No! Never! I wouldn't think
7 of it! (*Etc.*)

8 **DEBORAH:** Then an old woman of the temple walked up to
9 them, looked at the baby Jesus, and began praising
10 God. The woman started speaking prophecies about the
11 baby. I tell you what — there are strange people
12 everywhere! (*REBEKAH enters.*)

13 **REBEKAH:** Here's another juicy tidbit for you. I guess three
14 wise and wealthy men from Persia showed up at Mary
15 and Joseph's house and they wanted to see the (*Makes*
16 *finger quotes.*) "new King."

17 **SARAH:** A *baby* king?

18 **DEBORAH:** Like I said, there are strange people
19 everywhere!

20 **REBEKAH:** But they brought gifts of gold, frankincense,
21 and myrrh, so I guess they weren't so bad after all.

22 **DEBORAH:** True. It's always nice to receive gifts, even
23 under false pretense.

24 **REBEKAH:** You're going to love this — they followed a star
25 to the baby Jesus! (*ALL laugh.*) Yes, that's right, and
26 when the wise men left, they were supposedly warned
27 in a dream not to go home by way of Jerusalem, but to
28 take another way.

29 **MIRIAM:** Well, I sure hope they made it, since they seem to
30 do a lot of dreaming. (*MARTHA enters.*)

31 **MARTHA:** Talk about dreaming — I have news of another
32 dream. Joseph's. The talk on the street is that an angel
33 told him to take Mary and the baby and go to Egypt.
34 And why? Herod, that Roman rascal in Jerusalem, was
35 trying to kill the child who was supposed to be the



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