

Mary the Seventh Girl: Extraordinary Miracles in an Ordinary Life

Mary A. Johnson

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Johnson has found peace and happiness in her life, and her time line of miracles will intrigue those who seek the same solace in their faith.

Mary A. Johnson's memoir, *Mary the Seventh Girl*, is a chronicle of moments where her faith was the strongest, and how extraordinary occurrences have reassured her of God's existence and his active participation in her happiness.

Johnson has had her fair share of trying times, between her divorce, her mother's health issues, the devastation of Tropical Storm Allison, and a condition that affects her ability to speak. Still, Johnson finds the beauty in the little things, and sees Jesus in everything she does. Her faith has allowed her to feel thankful for her life despite the hardships she has faced, both the major and the mundane. Rather than dwell on the negative, she has chosen to focus on her belief that she is not alone. This belief has been reinforced for Johnson time and again by what she calls "miracles"—physical signs and intense emotions that she feels have come straight from Christ. She has compiled a dutiful chronicle of these moments of spiritual renewal in *Mary the Seventh Girl*, beginning with the reassurance she feels being the seventh in a line of daughters and her mother naming her Mary.

The book is simple in its message, language, and topics, and Johnson's sincerity is charming. Her writing is candidly earnest, and her profound faith in God is nearly palpable. What is intriguing about the book is Johnson's intention to help those who are going through their own hardships by telling the story of her miracle-filled life, thus quelling their fears of loneliness and encouraging them to see the beauty in the everyday as she has.

Each chapter could stand alone as its own tale of faith and indelible demonstrations of God, such as a white dove that appeared to Johnson immediately after she assured her dying mother that "when the Lord called her that she would be ready." Johnson took this mysterious bird as divine encouragement that her words were wise.

While these signs of God are often fantastic and memorable images, the book becomes somewhat repetitive in its structure and message. Johnson could perhaps trim down some of the phrases addressing the reader that seem more appropriate for a verbal story rather than a literary one—"Hold on, this gets better," "I know that you agree with me," and "You probably guessed what happened next," for example—and let her stories speak for themselves through more detailed imagery. Though Johnson occasionally alludes to her reasons for her frequent prayer, perhaps more detail about the particulars of her turmoil would make her miracles and swells of emotion even more compelling. For example, she mentions "psychological stress" she endured because of her family members, and the subsequent prayer and miracle that calmed her, but she does not go further into her strife than that.

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PAIGE VAN DE WINKLE (August 24, 2015)

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