

# **WAS MARY A VIRGIN HER ENTIRE LIFE? DID JESUS HAVE ANY BROTHERS?**

*The Catholic Blog - Helping people find answers to the most common questions about Catholicism with answers from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Bible.*

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## **“Was Mary a virgin her entire life?” - Important Passages of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* to Consider:**

- **“led the Church to confess Mary’s real and perpetual virginity” (CCC 499)**
- “Against this doctrine the objection is raised that the Bible mentions brother and sisters of Jesus. The Church has always understood these passages as not referring to other children of the Virgin Mary. In fact James and Joseph, ‘brothers of Jesus,’ are **sons of another Mary**, a disciple of Christ, whom St. Matthew significantly calls ‘the other Mary.’ They are **close relations of Jesus**, according to an Old Testament expression.” (CCC 500)
- “Mary ‘remained a virgin in conceiving her Son, a virgin in giving birth to him, a virgin in carrying him, a virgin in nursing him at her breast, **always a virgin**” (CCC 510)

## **“Was Mary a virgin her entire life?” - Important Scriptures to Consider:**

- Matthew 1:24–25 “When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but **knew her not until she had given birth** to a son. And he called his name Jesus.” (ESV)
- 1 Corinthians 7:3–5 “The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and **likewise the wife to her husband. [4] For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does.** Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. [5] **Do not deprive one another**, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” (ESV)
- John 7:3–5 “So **his brothers said to him**, “Leave here and go to Judea, that your disciples also may see the works you are doing. [4] For no one works in secret if he seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, show yourself to the world.” [5] For not even his brothers believed in him. (ESV)
- Matthew 13:55–56 “Is not this the carpenter’s son? **Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? [56] And are not all his sisters with us?** Where then did this man get all these things?” (ESV)
- Luke 8:19–21 “Then **his mother and his brothers came to him**, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. [20] And he was told, “Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you.” [21] But he answered them, “My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it.” (ESV)
- John 2:12 “After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.” (ESV)
- John 7:5 “For **not even his brothers believed in him.**” (ESV)
- Acts 1:13–14 “And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. [14] All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and **Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.**” (ESV)

- 1 Corinthians 9:5 “Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as do the other apostles and **the brothers of the Lord** and Cephas?” (ESV)
- 1 Corinthians 15:7 “Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.” (ESV)
- Galatians 1:19 “But I saw none of the other apostles except **James the Lord's brother.**” (ESV)
- Galatians 2:9 “and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.” (ESV)
- Jude 1 “Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and **brother of James**”
- James 2:1 “My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.” (ESV)
- John 2:12 “After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.” (ESV)

**“Was Mary a virgin her entire life?” - Important Questions to Consider:**

- Would having other children detract from Mary’s holiness? Or add to it according to Gen 1:28?
  - Genesis 1:28 “And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (ESV)
  - 1 Timothy 5:14 “So I would have younger widows marry, bear children, manage their households, and give the adversary no occasion for slander.” (ESV)
- In John 2, Jesus has just performed a miracle changing water to wine and rebuked his mother Mary in the process. This same passage refers to Jesus’ mother and “brothers” as continuing with him to Capernaum. **Why are these “brothers” referenced and so involved in traveling with Jesus’ mother if they are only cousins or more distant relatives?**
- Why is there no historical or linguistic evidence that the Greek words (adelphoi (“brothers”) and adelphai (“sisters”)) support this idea of them not being brothers and sisters but just distant relatives?
- Would Mary not have been a bad wife if she refused to be physically intimate with her husband Joseph?
  - 1 Corinthians 7:3–5 “The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. [4] For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. [5] Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” (ESV)
- Why would the Catholic Church invent and propagate the idea that Mary was always a virgin? If they would twist the Scriptures to misrepresent this, what other areas of their Tradition are untrustworthy?

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