

Mary, Dorothy, Katherine, and scripture's hidden figures

## **Like the stories of African-American women mathematicians at NASA, our faith's heritage reminds us to look for the people behind the scenes.**

By [Darian Duckworth](#)

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At the end of the film *Hidden Figures*, I turned to my friend and said, "That's a part of history I never learned in school."

Many of us can claim the same lack of knowledge. What we know about NASA and the space program largely revolves around John Glenn's orbit of the earth and Neil Armstrong walking on the moon. *Hidden Figures*, which tells the story of three African-American women who worked as mathematicians at NASA in the 1960s, unveils what all took place on earth in order to put astronauts into space successfully and safely.

The women are [Mary](#), [Dorothy](#), and [Katherine](#). They are brilliant, hard-working, and quick-witted. Katherine solves problems that take up a wall covered in chalkboard. Dorothy figures out how to operate this device called an "IBM," the great-grandmother of our laptop computers. Mary devises a plan to turn her engineering mind into an engineering degree, despite the rules of segregation.

What I loved about this film was not so much the history lesson but watching her-story, and her-story, and her-story, unfold as part of history. They raise their children. They go to church. They play matchmaker. They dance around the kitchen as they cook together.

They also speak out for their rights. They name injustices. They ask for change not in fiery speeches but in faithful practices of their work. They earn respect from their

colleagues and engineer progress.

Yet many of us are only now hearing her-story for the first time.

When we read the scriptures, our history as disciples of Jesus Christ, we come across many a Mary, Dorothy, and Katherine—figures hidden behind the bigger stories of the Bible. Some of us may feel like our lives are figures as hidden as those mysterious, mathematical symbols on Katherine's chalkboard. Yet the story of our faith's heritage, and the story of women like these, remind us of the big impact our faithful living can make.

Impacts as big as the cosmos:

“Do you still not perceive? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you gathered?” — Matt. 16:9

Every person counts. Five loaves can feed 5,000. History may not tell us the name of the boy who gave Jesus those five loaves, but we know how much his gift mattered. So it is with us all in the body of Christ. There are many stories of our lives that remain hidden, so let's keep searching for them. Let's seek to be good students of the scriptures as well as history, searching out those stories and learning from them. Let's aim to be a Dorothy, a Mary, and a Katherine. Let's make a difference by honoring all the different ways in which God calls us—and uses us—for the advancement of the kingdom on earth.

*Originally posted at [Duckworth's blog](#)*