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Lyrics And Chords To Mary Did You Know

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The Enduring Appeal of "Mary Did You Know"

Few modern Christmas songs have captured the imagination of listeners quite like "Mary Did You Know." Written by Mark Lowry and Buddy Greene, this poignant piece poses a series of deeply reflective questions to the mother of Jesus. The genius of the song lies not in its complex theology, but in its simple, human perspective. It invites us to imagine the private thoughts and silent wonders of a young mother holding the Savior of the world. At the heart of its popularity is the profound interplay between the **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know**, which together create an atmosphere of reverence, mystery, and gentle awe. This article will explore the song in depth, from its lyrical origins to the chord progressions that bring it to life, offering insight for both casual listeners and performing musicians.

The Story Behind the Song

Before diving into the specific **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know**, it is valuable to understand the story behind its creation. The lyrics were originally written by Mark Lowry in 1984 as a monologue for his church's Christmas program. Lowry, a Christian comedian and singer, wanted to capture the wonder of the Incarnation from Mary's perspective. For several years, the words existed only as a spoken piece. It was not until 1991 that Lowry asked his friend, Buddy Greene, to set the text to music. Greene, a gifted guitarist and composer, crafted a melody that perfectly matched the tender, questioning tone of the lyrics. The result was a song that felt both ancient and new, blending a folk-like simplicity with a sophisticated harmonic structure. The collaboration produced a piece that has since been recorded by countless artists, including Kathy Mattea, Kenny Rogers, Wynonna Judd, and perhaps most famously, by Pentatonix and Carrie Underwood.

The song's ability to resonate across different genres and generations is a testament to the effectiveness of its musical and lyrical construction. The **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know** work in tandem to evoke a sense of mystery. The chords do not simply support the melody; they enhance the emotional weight of each question, creating moments of tension and resolution that mirror the lyrical content.

Understanding the Lyrics: A Narrative of Wonder

The lyrics of the song are structured as a series of rhetorical questions directed at Mary. These questions are not meant to be answered in the song, but rather to provoke contemplation in the listener. The first verse sets the scene by asking Mary if she knew that her baby boy would one day walk on water and save humanity. This immediately establishes the central theme of the song: the vast difference between the ordinary child Mary held and the extraordinary destiny He carried. The second verse continues this line of questioning, asking if she knew that He would give sight to a blind man, calm a storm, and walk where angels tread. The bridge, which is

the emotional climax of the song, shifts from questions to statements. Here, the lyrics proclaim the miraculous events that this child will accomplish: "The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the dead will live again." This lyrical shift is almost always mirrored in the music through a key change or a significant harmonic shift.

The power of these words lies in their universality. Whether a listener is a devout Christian or simply someone who appreciates beautiful storytelling, the image of a mother pondering the future of her child is deeply moving. The **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know** are perfectly matched because the music never tries to upstage the words. Instead, it provides a gentle, supportive environment where the weight of the questions can be fully felt.

Musical Composition and Key Signature

The song is most commonly performed in the key of C major or D major, though many artists transpose it to suit their vocal range. The original key written by Buddy Greene is often considered to be in the key of C, but recordings vary widely. Carrie Underwood's version, for example, is in D major, while Pentatonix performs it in E-flat major. For guitarists, the key of C is often the most accessible, as it allows for open chords and a warm, resonant tone. For pianists, the key of C is also straightforward. The song's tempo is slow and contemplative, typically around 70-75 beats per minute, which gives the performer ample space to shape each phrase.

The harmonic language of the song is rooted in traditional folk and gospel music. It uses common chord progressions, but with subtle variations that keep it interesting. The most critical aspect of playing the song is not speed or technical skill, but dynamic control and phrasing. The **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know** require a gentle touch. The verses should be played softly, almost like a lullaby, with the volume gradually building as the song progresses through the chorus and into the powerful bridge.

Basic Chords for Beginner Players

If you are a beginner looking to learn this song on the guitar or piano, starting in the key of C is the best approach. The core chords you need are C, G, Am, F, and E7. These five chords will allow you to play through the entire song, albeit in a simplified version. Here is a basic progression for the verse in the key of C:

- C - Mary, did you know...
- G - That your baby boy...
- Am - Would one day walk on water?
- F - Mary, did you know...
- C - That your baby boy...
- G - Would save our sons and daughters?
- C - Did you know...
- F - That your baby boy...
- C - Has come to make you new?
- Am - This child that you delivered...
- F - Will soon deliver you.
- G - (Transition to chorus)

This progression is a classic I-V-vi-IV-V pattern, which is used in countless popular songs. It is easy to play and sounds beautiful. Learning these basic **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know** in this simplified form is an excellent way for beginners to join in the song during the holiday season.

Chords for Intermediate and Advanced Players

For intermediate players, the real beauty of the song emerges when you add richer chord voicings and passing chords. Instead of playing a simple C major, try a Cmaj7 (C E G B). This adds a soft, jazzy texture that suits the

reflective mood. Similarly, substitute the Am with Am7 (A C E G) and the F with Fmaj7 (F A C E). The single most important chord to master for this song is the E7 chord, which is used to create tension leading back to the F chord or the Am chord in the bridge. A common advanced progression includes a walk-down bass line in the verses. For example:

- C - G/B - Am - (walking down) - F
- This gives a sense of forward motion that a simple block chord progression lacks.

In the bridge, the song often modulates or uses a series of secondary dominants to build intensity. The chords for the bridge typically include C, G/B, Am, C7, F, Fm, and C. The shift from F to Fm (the minor fourth) is one of the most emotionally powerful moments in the song. It colors the lyric "the dead will live again" with a sense of poignant wonder. Mastering these nuanced chord changes will elevate your performance from a simple sing-along to a deeply moving musical experience. Understanding the **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know** at this level allows the performer to become a storyteller.

Lyrical and Chord Breakdown: Section by Section

Let us now examine the song section by section to see how the **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know** interact so effectively.

The Verse

The verse is characterized by a gentle, rolling rhythm. The chords move in a predictable but satisfying way. The melody stays within a comfortable range, allowing the singer to focus on diction and emotional delivery. The lyrics here are purely interrogative. The chord progression supports this by ending each phrase on a question mark, musically speaking. The G chord at the end of the verse phrases creates a sense of "hanging," which is resolved when the chorus begins on C. This tension and release is a fundamental principle of Western music, and it is used to great effect here.

The Chorus

The chorus of the song is actually quite short, consisting of only two lines: "Mary, did you know? Mary, did you know?" It is almost a response to the verses, an echo of wonder. In many arrangements, the harmony parts become more prominent here. While the verse might feature a solo voice, the chorus often brings in full vocal harmonies or a fuller instrumental texture. The chord progression remains similar, but the dynamic level should increase slightly. The **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know** in the chorus are designed to build momentum toward the bridge.

The Bridge

The bridge is the climax of the song. Lyrically, it shifts from questions to declarative statements. The chords reflect this shift by becoming more complex and intense. The introduction of the C7 chord (dominant seventh) creates a bluesy, gospel inflection. The use of the Fm chord (minor subdominant) is the emotional peak. This is where the song moves from being a simple Christmas tune to a profound theological meditation. Each line of the bridge ("The blind will see," "The deaf will hear," "The dead will live again") should be delivered with increasing intensity, leading to the final return to the verse or a final, quiet resolution. The interplay here between the **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know** is nothing short of masterful.

Performance Tips for Vocalists and Instrumentalists

Performing this song requires a combination of technical skill and emotional vulnerability. Here are a few tips:

1. Dynamics are everything. The song should start very softly. Think of it as a lullaby. Save your full voice for the bridge. The contrast between the quiet verses and the powerful bridge is what gives the song its impact.
2. Pay attention to phrasing. Do not rush the lyrics. Each question deserves a moment of silence before the

next one begins. The tempo should feel like a gentle heartbeat. Let the lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know breathe.

3. For guitarists: Use fingerpicking instead of strumming for the verses. A simple pattern of bass note - pinch - pinch (e.g., thumb on bass, then index and middle on the high strings) creates a beautiful, harp-like sound. For the bridge, you can switch to a gentle strum.

4. For pianists: Use sustain pedal generously but carefully. Change the pedal with every chord change to avoid blurring the harmony. Use arpeggiated chords (spreading the notes out) for the verses.

5. Interpretation: Sing the song as if you are asking the questions yourself. Do not just sing the notes; sing the meaning. The best performances of this song are those that sound like a personal conversation.

Mastering these elements will ensure that your rendition is both technically proficient and emotionally resonant. The **lyrics and chords to Mary Did You Know** are merely the skeleton; your performance provides the flesh and blood.

Why This Song Continues to Resonate

The enduring popularity of "Mary Did You Know" can be attributed

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