



Joseph

God Honors Those Who
Are Obedient

*Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as
the angel of the Lord commanded him*

—Matthew 1:24

God with Us

I've always felt sorry for Joseph. When a baby is born, everybody oohs and aahs over the baby and rushes around to take care of the mother. That's understandable. She has gone through nine months of pregnancy, followed by painful childbirth. But when a baby is born, nobody gives the father any attention. Fathers just stand around with a silly grin, and we don't know what to do. But Joseph is essential to the Christmas story. Without him, there would have been no Savior. Why do I say that? Scripture was clear about the requirements for the Messiah. To be the king of Israel, the Messiah had to be a legal heir of King David. The right to be a king was inherited through the father. Although Joseph was not the biological father of Jesus, he was the legal father. Because of that, Jesus inherited the right to rule from Joseph. If Joseph had bailed on Mary, Jesus would have been disqualified from being the Savior of the world.

Think about this story from Joseph's point of view. Joseph was a carpenter. If you know anything about carpenters, they are usually very precise. They want everything planned and measured and cut in just the right way. I imagine that was Joseph's temperament as well. He and Mary knew they were going to get married. I'm sure Joseph had a blueprint for what their lives were going to be like: they would get married, save some money, and then build their dream house in Nazareth and raise a family there. I bet he had the blueprint ready to go when Mary came to him and said, "Joseph, I'm pregnant. And the father is God." How would you have responded to that news? The Bible says Joseph didn't believe her at first. He decided to end the engagement so as not to cause any shame to Mary. Can you imagine what that news must have been like to Joseph, to realize the person he loved most in the world had betrayed him? At least, that's what he thought. Joseph was getting ready to end the relationship quietly when something dramatic happened:

Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." . . . And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus. (Matthew 1:19–21, 24–25)

The angel said to Joseph, "God is the one responsible for this. You are to take Mary as your wife." And Joseph didn't argue. He didn't understand how it happened, and he

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Savior



didn't know how it would turn out, but even in the darkness, Joseph obeyed God. That's what it means to be obedient.

When you see Joseph in a nativity scene, ask yourself: "Am I obeying what God has told me to do, even though I can't see the outcome of my obedience?"

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Questions for Reflection

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1. Have you ever obeyed God when what He required was hard or didn't make sense? What does Joseph's story show us about the importance of obeying God even when we can't see the outcome?
 2. What are some things you can do this Christmas season to be more obedient to God?