## Joseph's Response

Scripture: Matthew 1:19–20
Code: B111219

Have you ever imagined being in Joseph's shoes? Think about his predicament. Joseph is a righteous man, betrothed to a chaste young woman. The future looks bright as he maps out plans to build a family with his soon-to-be bride. But then he hears the shocking news—Mary is pregnant. That's no small dilemma for Joseph, especially since he is obviously not the father of the child. What would *you* do?

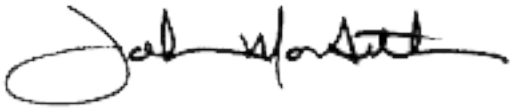
Initial news of Mary's pregnancy presented Joseph with a twofold problem. A caring and responsible person concerned about doing the right thing, Joseph was unwilling to proceed with his original plans once he perceived that a crucial part of those plans was no longer acceptable. His difficulty was intensified by the reality that he was a righteous man, genuinely concerned about doing what was right according to God's Law. First, when Joseph realized Mary was pregnant, he knew he could not go ahead with their marriage. He knew he was not the father and, based on what he knew at the time, he had to assume that another man was.

Joseph's second difficult decision concerned how he should then treat Mary. Because he was a good and loving man, he was grieved at the thought of shaming her publicly (a common practice in those days when a wife was unfaithful), and even more so at the prospect of demanding her death, as provided for in Deuteronomy 22:23–24. We don't know if he felt anger, resentment, or bitterness, but he certainly experienced shame at what he had to assume was true. However, Joseph's concern was not primarily with his own shame and embarrassment, but with Mary's. Matthew 1:19 says, "not wanting to make her a public example, [Joseph] was minded to put her away secretly."

Therefore, Joseph's plan was to divorce Mary secretly so she would not have to endure the disgrace of everyone in the community knowing about her supposed sin. Not many husbands ever display such firmly held and deeply felt love for their wives. Of course eventually, when the marriage didn't occur, everyone would have found out that something had gone wrong. But at least in the meantime Mary would be protected from humiliation and death.

The Lord, however, in His sovereign providence and wonderful grace, intervened directly and spared Joseph the further trauma of actually carrying out his divorce plans. "But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit'" (Matthew 1:20). That verse underscores the miraculous nature of the virgin birth and the supernatural character surrounding the entire event. It also provides divine assurance to Joseph ("son of David") and to us that Jesus had legitimate royal lineage that legally came through Joseph as a descendant of King David.

The angel's words provide the ultimate and most irrefutable testimony to the essential truth of the virgin birth and to the proper response Joseph was to have to Mary's extraordinary situation.



Available online at: http://www.gty.org

COPYRIGHT (C) 2024 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (https://www.gty.org/about#copyright).