

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Christmas Eve – December 24, 2025

²⁰But behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ ²⁴When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, ²⁵but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.”

- Matthew 1:20-21, 24-25 -

When the angel came to Joseph, he had already made his decision. The angel explained that Mary had been faithful. The child was not of man. Instead, God had chosen her for a very special purpose. Joseph was aware of Scripture and understood the prophecy from Isaiah: *“the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”*

Imagine his shock when Joseph found out that his own wife would be the virgin mentioned in Scripture. Joseph had an interesting situation on his hands. He was being asked to allow the pregnancy to continue with a child that wasn’t his own. This would result in Joseph claiming the child and adopting him as his own. By allowing the baby to be born under his roof, he’d be responsible for the child. But the child would come to save men from their sins. He would be special indeed. Joseph listened to what the angel had to say, and Joseph obeyed. In silent submission, he listened to what the scriptures told him, listened to what the angel told him, and listened to what his heart told him. He knew that others would find out about the pregnancy and assumptions would place guilt on both of them. People would assume that they had relations prior to marriage. Mary and Joseph would be treated as unrighteous in a world where how you were perceived was more important than how you really were.

But he trusted in God that this was the right thing to do. He trusted that God would find a way for Joseph to live with the disgrace that society would see in both Mary and Joseph. In obedience, Joseph denied his own needs, reputation, name and standing among his peers. He chose to deny himself to honor God through obedience to His messenger. He obeyed what the angel told him and let his ego take second seat to following God’s will.

It took courage to follow God’s will when everything in his fiber told Joseph to divorce Mary. Joseph chose to be humble and place himself after the needs of Mary and the child. He chose to believe in what the message told him and submit to the will of God. But Joseph didn’t do it on his own. Joseph needed help with believing the angel’s words, like we all do. Joseph needed help to believe that Isaiah’s prophecy was coming to fruition: it was happening! Soon! But he certainly didn’t have that faith on his own. God gave Joseph the gift of the Holy Spirit to stir up that faith, to give him the ability to believe the angel’s proclamation, to give Joseph the ability to submit to God’s will.