



*Host:* So, Joseph, tell us how you met Mary.

*Joseph:* Yeah, so when I was around 20-something, I had been set up with this girl in her teens. Things were really different then, so it wasn't just for dating, but our parents had arranged our marriage. I didn't have much choice in the matter; everyone just knew this was the way things were, so they just went with it.

Anyway, I'm a carpenter by trade, and I love building things. I won't ever be rich, but I've always made a good living from the things I make, and I make them with quality. I thought I could be a good husband.

*Host:* Thanks, Joseph! Now Mary, we know that you were betrothed to Joseph, but something happened that set you guys on a tough road. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

*Mary:* Sure. So much like Joseph, I was just an ordinary girl. Before the angel appeared, I was a normal girl, betrothed to a godly man. Then something crazy happened: an angel appeared to me – a real angel! He looked right at me, and I thought he had to have the wrong person. I mean, imagine yourself just sitting around doing homework or reading a book when an angel comes out of nowhere; surely, he meant to appear to someone more important, right? I'll never forget what he said: **"Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you! Blessed are you among women."** (Luke 1:28, ESV) I was definitely afraid. After all, I had never seen an angel before! He must have recognized my fear, because he said, **"Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God!"** (Luke 1:30, ESV) I couldn't believe what he said. He knew my name. All of a sudden, I felt a peace like I had never felt before. I had found favor with the Lord! Could it be? I mean, was I dreaming? But he continued, **"you will conceive in your womb and bore a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High... and the Lord will give to Him the throne of his father, David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."** (Luke 1:31-33, ESV)

I knew Joseph was from the family line of David, the line that the coming King would be from, but I never thought that we would be the parents of the one we had waited for. I instantly felt like I was not good enough for the job.

Have you ever felt that way? Like maybe you weren't up for the task God gave you? Then, something else caught my attention: how could I have a baby when I was a virgin? The angel answered that this child was the child of the Holy Spirit! The child was going to be both man and God; I would hold the Most High in my arms and cradle Him as a baby! Maybe to give me reassurance, maybe as a comfort, the angel told me that my relative, Elizabeth, would have a son, as well. This was a miracle, too, because she was much too old to bear a child. Truly, nothing is impossible with God! Now, my only question was what Joseph would think! After all, a woman who was not yet married and already pregnant could be stoned to death in our culture. I started to feel sick.

*Host:* Now, you both mentioned the word 'betrothed.' This audience isn't very familiar with what that word means. Joseph, take a minute to share about betrothal.

*Joseph:* That's a great point. In Bible times, marriages were arranged by the parents of the bride and groom and often without even consulting the couple to be married. A contract was prepared in which the groom's parents paid a bride price. Such a contract was immediately deemed binding, with the couple considered married, even though the actual ceremony and consummation of the marriage would not occur for as long as a year afterwards.

*Host:* And you were betrothed to Mary.

*Joseph:* That's right. So, I was really excited when my parents told me they had found the girl for me. They had talked to her parents, and we had given a dowry to Mary's family, so things were set. We were betrothed, and the period of waiting went on without us seeing much of each other. The betrothal period could last up to a year, because it was seen as a time of testing of our fidelity.

It was during that time that a buddy told me that Mary was pregnant, and she had gone to visit her relatives Elizabeth and Zechariah. All I could think was, "What! Are you kidding me?" I guess that fidelity thing wasn't true. Did she know she could be put to death? You know they stone girls for that. I cared about her, even though I was angry and hurt; I made the decision to divorce her quietly.

*Mary:* And I was devastated.