

## The Christmas Dilemma – Joseph

Some people are planners and analyzers and others are more spontaneous. Joseph was a planner. He wanted to be sure of his planning and thought through things in order for all the pieces to be in their proper place.

That was the plan and the purpose all along for Joseph. Never doubt it. And he never woke up from the dream God gave him in the night. May we wake up from sleep only to make God's dream come true. And that is precisely what Joseph did. His Christmas Dilemma of doubt was swallowed up in the dream from God. What about you? What is God dreaming for you that He wants you to quit aiming for and instead, fire away? Don't be afraid to pull the trigger when God shows you His dreams for your life.

Matthew's gospel considers the birth of Jesus from Joseph's perspective while Luke's gospel shares from Mary's viewpoint. Matthew's account stresses the divine origin of Jesus. Verses 18 and 20 both speak of our Savior's conception inside the womb of Mary as being conceived "from the Holy Spirit." This claim emphasizes Jesus' divinity.

Luke's account seems to accentuate the divine power and grace involved in Jesus' birth process. That account talks about how Mary was greeted by the angel as one who was identified as a "favored one" in Luke 1:28. This favor was not of her own doing, but rather because God decided to pour favor of his grace upon her. Mary was one who was full of grace because of what she received freely from God, not because of who she was before God sent Gabriel with the news for the plans and purpose He had in store for her as the mother of Jesus.

Mary's dilemma of saying, "Yes" to the purpose of being the mother of the Son of God was answered with a faith-filled and humble: "Let it be to me according to your word." Joseph had his doubts when he learned of Mary's pregnancy. Her pregnancy invaded his plans that already were solidified in his mind. Joseph probably felt a host of emotions run through mind and heart.

All of these emotions are legitimate feelings when our plans get blown up in a single second. Joseph had lived his life as one with impeccable character and integrity. He had waited and planned for this moment and the start of a new marriage and a family with this woman. Now...all that was gone when he found out she was carrying a baby in her womb. It wasn't his...and neither was she going to be much longer.

According to Jewish law, Joseph had rights to dissolve the marriage and could have had Mary prosecuted and put to death for what he perceived that she had done. However, verse 19 shows us something about who Joseph the planner also was when it came to his core.

Joseph was one who was both righteous and compassionate at the same time.

He didn't fly off the handle. He figured out a new plan. And he considered it in his methodical way before he ever fired the shot as verse 20 states, "But as he considered these things..." He was mulling the plans, analyzing them carefully, then decided to sleep on them before divorcing Mary. That was his new plan, but it wasn't to be God's purpose. Proverbs 19:21: "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand."

As Joseph slept on his plans, God showed the purpose for the pregnancy and how Joseph fit into the bigger story God had all along for both Mary and Joseph. God's purposes always stand in the end. However, the kindness and thoughtfulness of God did not leave Joseph out of the plans for the bigger purpose. (Matthew 1:20-22)

The dream that Joseph had was a serious, God-sized purpose for an “unplanned” pregnancy. Nothing could thwart the purpose of the Lord that were formed in His mind. Yes, this plan with a purpose would stand, even though Joseph kept aiming toward his plans that were still clouded with doubt about what exactly to do in his new situation and dilemma. God’s plans and purpose had been patient and waiting for just the right moment to be unveiled to stand tall. (Matthew 1:22-23)

The Lord had been waiting to fulfill the promise foretold by Isaiah the prophet over 700 years earlier that is found in Isaiah 7:14. This immaculate conception by the virgin would carry and bear God in the flesh. Yes, the purpose of the Lord indeed will stand!

Don’t miss what happened next as God ensured Joseph would get a new set of plans with purpose as he dreamed this dream birthed in the mind and heart of God. (Matthew 1:24-25)

Did you catch it? Did you see it? Did you notice what set the Lord’s purpose and plans in motion? Joseph woke up from sleep...but not the dream. The dream of the Lord drove out the dilemma of doubt in Joseph.

Joseph awoke from sleep and fired a new shot with a new aim that included a new name for his adoptive son on the way (Matthew 1:21)

Before Joseph did that, he took Mary as his wife without any more doubt that God wanted Him to do it. Would there be additional dilemmas along the way? Sure. All marriages have them. But the dream of God was clear, and Joseph was to be about living the dream.

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