

Speaking to the soul



Following God

As Joseph considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. “Joseph, son of David,” the angel said, “do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit.” Matthew 1:20

This account is so familiar to us that we need to take a moment to try to imagine what the experience must have been like for Joseph. In all probability, he was a man in his

20s. Mary may well have been a teenager. He was clearly of good character and took his Jewish faith seriously. His decision to end the relationship quietly was understandable - but he must have been experiencing a riot of emotions, thinking about Mary, himself, his family's reputation and his desire to do what God wanted.

As he turned these things over in his mind, he had a dream in which he was addressed with his family title. He was Joseph, belonging to the line of the great King David. In the dream, an angel told him not to be fearful but to take Mary as his wife, because the baby was a gift of the Holy Spirit. What I love about this story is that those words were enough for Joseph. Having heard them, he married Mary. He must have known that people would assume he was the father. He would have to cope with the sniggers and gossip but he could do so because he knew he was being obedient to God.

God will often ask us to do things which are not well understood by those around us. Jesus lived with this continually. He was forever being accused of acting with bad motives - and even being inspired by the devil. The prophets in the Old Testament were rarely thanked for their utterances and were often cold shouldered by their communities.

Following God's will is rarely easy. We may know little about Joseph, but his obedience to God in an incredibly awkward situation is deeply impressive. It should inspire us as we seek to serve God today.

QUESTION

How do you hear God speak to you?

PRAYER

Loving Father, thank you for the ways in which you make your will known to me. Give me courage to be obedient to you whatever the reaction from others. Amen

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