

People of Promise  
Joseph and Mary  
610 words

## A Unique Promise

Joseph and Mary:  
Conceiving the Inconceivable

Matthew 1:20

Joseph and Mary were not what you would call a unique Jewish couple. He was a carpenter (Matt. 13:55), she was a relative of a priestly family (Luke 1:36), and they were (like a lot of people) descendants of King David (their lineage opened no doors in Bethlehem; Luke 2:7). They saw themselves like most folks do--ordinary, plain, middle-class, unknown by the world at large. It's easy to understand how shocked they were at God's promise to do a unique thing through them.

Almost everyone knows the "Christmas story"--how the angel Gabriel came and announced to Mary that she would conceive a child by the power of the Holy Spirit. This would be a troublesome announcement at any time for a young woman, but the fact that Mary was engaged to Joseph made it doubly sensitive. We don't know how Joseph learned of Mary's "condition" (Matt. 1:18), but we do know he responded with compassion and decorum--he planned to break his engagement to Mary quietly. We don't know if he was unaware of the Holy Spirit's role, or if he knew but didn't believe. But the promise he needed from God came in a dream: "Do not be afraid . . . what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:20).

A baby conceived by the Holy Spirit? To a normal, everyday, Jewish couple like Joseph and Mary, this would have been inconceivable. They simply had no frame of reference for being personally involved in such acts of God. Not that they doubted God's ability to do such a thing. Wasn't there a reference in the prophet Isaiah to a young woman or virgin giving birth to a son whose name would be Immanuel (Isa. 7:14)? It wasn't God they doubted, it was themselves and their role in the plan of God. Surely they must have thought, "Why us, Lord? Why did you choose us to be the father and mother of one who will save us from our sins?" Without being irreverent, we could have answered this dazed young couple this way: "Why not you, Joseph and Mary? God has to use somebody. Remember: your forefather David was a shepherd boy when God chose him to become a king." God still wants to use ordinary people to accomplish unique things today.

Few Christians doubt God, but most Christians doubt that God has something unique for them to do. And yet most world-changing events have been accomplished by ordinary people like Joseph and Mary who said, "Yes . . . yes . . . yes . . . yes . . . yes" to God over an extended period of time. They didn't set out to do something unique, but it turned out that way because they believed God.

The next time you think God has mistaken you for a famous, smart, or qualified

Christian through whom he wants to do something unique, think of Joseph and Mary:

- Hasn't God always done his extraordinary work through ordinary people?

- Humanly speaking, didn't Jesus himself begin as an "ordinary" carpenter who said "Yes" to God (Mark 6:3; Heb. 5:8)?

- Are you listening and watching daily for opportunities to say "Yes" to God?

We have no reason to believe that God will ever conceive another child miraculously by the power of the Holy Spirit. But he may want to conceive something equally unique in the womb of your imagination--some idea or service that could bear much fruit in your family, your church, or the kingdom of God at large. Living with "Yes" on the tip of your tongue is a unique way to live for God.