



# THE EXHORTER

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***“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40***

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. ([prchurchofchrist.org](http://prchurchofchrist.org))

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***Matthew 1:19 "And Joseph her, husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly; but when he had considered this, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.'"***

Not a lot is said in the Scriptures about Joseph. He loved Mary. They were to be married. They were a simple Jewish couple that would have been forgotten in history except for the fact that God chose Mary to be the instrument to bring Jesus into the world. How exciting and privileged she was to do this.

Joseph was a carpenter by trade. He taught Jesus what he knew. Not very long into the Gospels, Joseph's name disappears. Mary's doesn't, but he does. He is not at the grave of Jesus. He is not at the cross. We don't know if he ever heard Jesus preach. We wonder if he ever saw Jesus perform a miracle. The common thought is that Joseph died, most likely died young. That happened back then. Sometimes, it still happens.

Our verse today reminds us that Mary and Joseph were not randomly picked by God. They were chosen because they were righteous and they seemed to be humble like the heart of the Lord. God always selected carefully. He chose David to be the king of Israel. He chose the apostles to open the doors of His kingdom. He chose Mary to bear the child Jesus. Care was given in this selection.

Our verse implies that Joseph and Mary were married. The text calls Joseph "her husband." In Jewish terms he was. In ours, he wasn't. Here, we do not consider

someone married until there has been a ceremony, vows exchanged, and papers signed. Before that, a couple may be engaged, but they are not married. We'd never seriously call our daughter's boyfriend as "her husband," not until there has been a wedding. It wasn't that way in Jewish circles. Engagement was binding, almost as much as a wedding. To break an engagement was very serious. Papers of "divorce" had to be granted. In this way, Joseph was Mary's husband. They were to be married. They were obligated to each other.

Here is a young couple, Mary, most likely a teenager, who are engaged to be married. Mary becomes pregnant. That alone would be devastating in any Jewish home. That meant at least one of the 10 commandments had been broken. All fingers would point to Joseph. He was the likely one. Through all this, his reputation would have taken a hit. The idea of a virgin having a child, although prophesied by Isaiah 700 years earlier, surely couldn't be what happened here. Not now. Not to this couple. Back then, there were no paternity tests that Joseph could take to prove his innocence. Joseph was concerned about Mary. He offered to put her away secretly.

Joseph did not want to expose Mary of adultery. He also did not want to marry her. He must have thought like most, that she had a secret lover. He knew it wasn't himself. How heartbroken he must have been. He would have been shocked. He thought he knew her. He thought she was righteous. The pregnant Mary was the end of their dreams. His life would be shattered. The only thing he could do would be to end the engagement, send her away and try to rebuild his life. I can only imagine the painful tears that were shed when she told him that she was with child. She would have spoken of angels and Holy Spirit and prophecy which all would have swirled around and around Joseph's head. The only thing he knew was that Mary was going to have a baby and it wasn't his. So hurt, so confused, so unsure as to what to do, God sent an angel in a dream to Joseph. God told him not to be afraid. Those words would be spoken later by Jesus to frightened apostles who were crossing a storm tossed sea. Be not afraid.

The voice of God reaffirmed what Mary had been saying. There was no other man. There was no sin. Adultery had not been committed. Mary is just as he once believed. I again can see tears as he apologized to her for not believing. The story was so incredible could she blame him?

And this begins the life story of Jesus-unbelievable forgiveness, unbelievable hope, unbelievable signs. Things done that no one has ever heard nor seen before.

I like Joseph. He starts out like many of us do. Scared, doubting and just having a hard time grasping what happened at first. But then we get it. Then we do as God says. God uses us. We add what small part that we can. That was Joseph, a righteous man.

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