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~ *Joseph and Mary in Nazareth* ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Matthew 1:18-25.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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Matthew 1:18-25 NASB	Matthew 1:18-25 ERV
<p>¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: when His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away secretly. ²⁰ 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 the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” ²² Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ “BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” ²⁴ And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took <i>Mary</i> as his wife, ²⁵ but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.</p>	<p>¹⁸ This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. ²⁰ As he 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. ²¹ And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord’s message through his prophet:</p> <p>²³ “Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”</p> <p>²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.</p>

2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

- The genealogy in Matthew 1:1-18 shows Joseph to be the legal heir of David and Solomon.
- The betrothal of Mary to Joseph was the equivalent to a civil contract of marriage that was to be followed by a religious ceremony.
- Betrothals were made in the bride’s house under a tent or canopy and was called “making sacred.” The bridegroom would give the bride a piece of money or an equivalent and say, “Lo, you are betrothed to me” or it could be done in writing.

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- The betrothal period might last a few weeks or months or even up to a year.
- The prophecy from Isaiah 7:14 was about a young maiden. In its original context it referred to the destruction of Israel and the removal of their threat from Judah before a young maiden could conceive. But in the Matthew context the Greek word is the precise word for virgin and it was the sign of God doing greater things in Israel, the things that would bring salvation to the world.

These insights were gleaned from The Words and Works of Jesus Christ – J.Dwight Pentecost

Answer these reflective questions.

When the angel told Mary that God would enable her to conceive miraculously, how much thought do you think she gave to the fact that she would have to tell Joseph? Do you think Mary expected Joseph to believe her story?

How do you think Joseph felt when Mary told him she was pregnant? How do you think Mary felt when Joseph rejected her story?

Why do you think God waited to tell Joseph in a dream that Mary was telling the truth? Why did God not tell Joseph ahead of time?

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The prophecy says that the baby would be called Immanuel which means God is with us. In what ways does the life of Jesus show that God was with his people?

The baby was also called Jesus because he would take away the sins of the people? In what ways has Jesus taken away your sins?
