

list, so to would God lead Joseph at a challenging time.

didn't mean he had to have her stoned, but he was able to find a way that would not hurt Mary and also fulfill the law.

Joseph has a dream where he is visited by an angel. The angel tells him that the baby growing inside Mary was ordained by God and not against God's will.

The first few words from the angel tell a lot. "Joseph, son of David," the angel begins. This establishes Joseph in the royal lineage of David. He will be the adoptive father of Jesus and would be joined into David's line, not by biological means, but by the will of God.

The second thing the angel tells Joseph is to not be afraid. This speaks to how Joseph is feeling right now. He was fearful that the law had been broken and fearful of what could happen to Mary and fearful of keeping Mary. All of his actions at that moment concerning Mary were based on fear. The angel is calling Joseph to a new way of fulfilling the law. Instead of operating by fear, he was called to live by faith.

He would marry Mary and she would give birth to a son, that Joseph was to name Jesus.

Theologian Stanley Hauerwas sees the book of Matthew as a template for discipleship:

Engaging the Text

As short as this passage is, there is a lot here that tells us what kind of person Joseph is. Joseph was engaged to be married to Mary. He then finds out that Mary is pregnant. That gives him pause. Mary and Joseph are engaged, but being engaged is not the same as what we think of as engagement. Actually, this is part of a two-step marriage process and Mary and Joseph were in between the two steps. Mary and Joseph would be considered married in the Palestinian culture of the day. So if Mary is pregnant, this means that she had been unfaithful.

Verse 19 states that Joseph is a righteous man which means Joseph takes the law seriously and wants to follow it to the letter. But he is also righteous in the sense that he did not want Mary to suffer. According to the law, an errant wife could be punished. Joseph was going to keep the law by setting Mary aside, but he would do it quietly. Joseph sought to follow the law, but to do it humanely. Finding Mary pregnant

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For Matthew, Jesus has changed the world, requiring that our lives be changed if we are to live as people of the new creation. Accordingly, the gospel is not information that invites us to decide what we will take or leave. Our task is not to understand the story that Matthew tells in light of our understanding of the world. Rather, Matthew would have our understanding of the world fully transformed as the result of our reading of his gospel. Matthew writes so that we might become followers, be disciples, of Jesus. To be a Christian does not mean that we are

to change the world, but rather that we must live as witnesses to the world that God has changed. We should not be surprised, therefore, if the way we live makes the change visible.¹

Joseph, through the angel's visit, had been transformed by God. He becomes an example of what it means to be a disciple- being willing to be changed by God.

Joseph is being called into a new way of following the law. Instead of dealing with Mary quietly, Joseph