

Introduction:

1. What is the most frenzied and stressful part of the Christmas season for you?
2. How would Joseph have fared in his predicament if, when he lived, they had social media, texting, the internet, cell phone cameras, 24 hour cable news, etc ?

Understanding:

3. Joseph would have known about Israel's hope for a messiah. The angel presented the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 to point to this. What affect would this have on Joseph? How does it affect you to contemplate this over 2,000 years later?
4. The angel points to an important role for Jesus: to save his people from their sins. Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua, which means the Lord saves. Often this time of the year you will see "Jesus is the reason for the season ". In the light of what the angel said, how would you explain how this is more than just a cute slogan against commercializing Christmas?
5. Dave mentioned that "Joseph had a lot of maturity and a lot of character for his age." What is there in the United States today that prevents that in young men? How can believers counteract that trend?
6. A.W. Tozer said we can wind up with a God who can "never surprise us, never overwhelm us, never astonish us, never transcend us." And in his book "Your God Is Too Small" J.B.Phillips warns that people have "captured and tamed and trained to their own liking Something that is really far too big ever to be forced into little man-made boxes with neat labels upon them." In what way are you most likely to "tame" God? Have you put God in a box?
7. William Willimon says that if Mary is "blessed among women," Joseph is "embarrassed among men." What is there about Joseph's story in today's passage that allows us to chuckle at Willimon's comment?
8. As the gospel spreads through Africa, and through Asia, and the Middle East—in countries where there's a long memory of wrongs done, and where there's a deep sense of needing to get revenge when you've been dishonored, you can see whole cultural patterns beginning to change. It's awesome. How do you think the culture in the U.S. would change if God gave that sort of revival to our own country?
9. Is being a kind, moral person the most important part of being a Christian? How does today's message answer that question?

Application:

10. Dave challenged those who are doing well financially. So if that describes you, would you commit to praying that God will show you someone in need? And then, at Christmas, do it. Give a ridiculous amount of money to someone who's struggling. Respond to God's gift of Jesus Christ by giving radically. And give it secretly.
11. After thinking about your answer to question 1, what are some steps you can take to make your Christmas more focussed on Jesus and less frenzied and stressful?
12. Joseph may have been held back by embarrassment. By God's grace this was only temporary. What is most strongly holding you back? Ask God to change your heart so that for you too it is only temporary.