



READ: Matthew 1:18-25 (NirV)

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about. His mother Mary and Joseph had promised to get married. But before they started to live together, it became clear that she was going to have a baby. She became pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph was faithful to the law. But he did not want to put her to shame in public. So he planned to divorce her quietly. But as Joseph was thinking about this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary home as your wife. The baby inside her is from the Holy Spirit. She is going to have a son. You must give him the name Jesus. That's because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to bring about what the Lord had said would happen. He had said through the prophet, "The virgin is going to have a baby. She will give birth to a son. And he will be called Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) The name Immanuel means "God with us." Joseph woke up. He did what the angel of the Lord commanded him to do. He took Mary home as his wife. But he did not sleep with her until she gave birth to a son. And Joseph gave him the name Jesus.

ENTER THE STORY:

Have you ever had a hard time falling asleep at night?

I wonder if Joseph had a hard time sleeping after he found out that Mary, his soon-to-be wife, was pregnant. Maybe he tossed and turned for a long time before he finally drifted off to sleep, but this night would be special because Joseph had a dream, and in the dream, an angel gave him an important message from God.

God wanted Joseph to take Mary as his wife and raise the baby as his own son. What a special honor! Even though this baby was God's own Son, Joseph would be his earthly father and would be able to teach him many things. Joseph was a carpenter, which meant he was good at building and fixing things. Over time as he raised this child, he would be able to teach him how to do all of that, too.

The angel told Mary and Joseph to name the baby Jesus, which means "God saves" because that is exactly what God sent Jesus to do...to seek and to save the lost. He would do this by giving up his own life as a sacrifice to pay the price for the sins of the world. God has always wanted to live with his people, but he is perfect and holy, and we are not. The reason we could not be in God's presence is because of our sin, so Jesus took care of that problem. When we put our trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, we are forgiven and invited back into God's presence, but we must go THROUGH Jesus! ***That is why Jesus is called Immanuel - God with us.***

This is what we celebrate at Christmas. God sent his Son Jesus to save us so that he could be with us forever.

PRAY: *God, remind us this Christmas season that your presence is always with us through your Son, Jesus - who is our Immanuel. Help us to look to him and trust in him and him alone to save us.*