

Opting In



This short drama was written to help introduce the NWBA theme for 2018 “Unlocking the Potential”, though you are welcome to use it in any context. It draws its inspiration from Matthew ch 1 v 18-21. Confronted with the reality of Mary’s situation, his instinct was to follow tradition and quietly leave her. But God offered him a very different vision, and though it would involve great personal cost, Joseph chose to be part of God’s salvation story. Our potential is realised when we are similarly willing to offer ourselves in obedience to God’s calling and commission – it might not always be the easiest option, but this is what it means to live as citizens of God’s Kingdom.

The scene is a public place in Bethlehem, a day or so after Jesus’ birth – perhaps a market place or even a local hostelry. Joseph is quite focussed, clearly on some kind of errand; keen to complete it and move on. Simeon is much more relaxed, treating the scene as a tourist. The two are long-standing acquaintances who have clearly not met for some time. Simeon notices Joseph, recognises him and strikes up a conversation. He is initially unsure but quickly realises that Joseph is someone he knows and recognises.

Simeon: Hey . . . it is you isn’t it – Joseph . . . Joseph Carpenter from Nazareth. Haven’t seen you in ages. How are you doing buddy?

Joseph: (A little bemused and awkward) I’m fine . . . I’m doing fine thanks.

Simeon: So what brings you to Bethlehem – you caught up in this big census?

Joseph: (still quite uncomfortable and looking to end the conversation as soon as possible) Yeah – that’s right.

Simeon: Well I’d never have had you down as being on of David’s clan – royal blood in the old veins then. So where are you staying – you in with all the family? I’m sharing a room with three cousins and my brother in law – driving me crazy they are.

Joseph: (even more awkward) No . . . I’m not staying anywhere.

Simeon: Wow – just in for the census and out again – that’s some trek. My old man said if the Romans are going to force this on us, we might as well make a trip of it. Mind you if he moans about having to come here one more time . . . anyhow how’s life treating you – married yet? Kids?

Joseph: Well sort of

Simeon: What do you mean sort of? You either have a family or you don’t

Joseph: Well yes I have a son

Simeon: That’s so cool – chip off the old block then . . . get it?? Carpenter? Chip off the old block – so how old is he? Too young to be taking up the old hammer and chisel yet I guess.

Joseph: (grasping the nettle) He was born yesterday!

Simeon: Woah! Man! That’s incredible – so is the wife with you – I heard the Romans were making women travel whatever state they were in.

Joseph: Yes Mary’s with me – that’s why I need to get back to her

Simeon: Hang on – you told me you weren’t staying anywhere, she can’t have just had the baby out in the street – anyhow, knowing your family I’ll bet they’re making a right fuss of her. I know what my mother’s like “When are you going to settle down with a nice girl and make me a grandmother” – hey why don’t I come over and see them all – It’ll be great to catch up with your old man.

Joseph: You can't!

Simeon: Oh Joseph – I'm so sorry – has he passed on? Well let me go and pay my respects to your mother, and hey maybe I can bring something over to wet the baby's head.

Joseph: My dad's just fine . . . it's just that you can't see them or more to the point I can't see them.

Simeon: What do you mean you can't see them. This is their first grandchild – If I know your mother she'll be all over him like I don't know what.

Joseph: It's not like that Simeon

Simeon: Joseph what are you talking about?

Joseph: Mary became pregnant before we were married – so the family . . . the family won't have her in the inn!

Simeon: But that's terrible – I mean I know what the rules say . . . but this is their first grandchild, he's their flesh and blood.

Joseph: Well that's just it – he's not.

Simeon: So you're telling me that he's not your son

Joseph: Well yes .. no ...he's . . . (recoiling from saying "God's son") He is my son and I will be a father to him but . .

Simeon: Joseph, Joseph what are you doing man – you know the routine. If you are telling me what I think you're telling me you have one great big get out clause – move on man, I'm not surprised your family are disowning you!

Joseph: That's what I was going to do but . . . (he stops short)

Simeon: But what Joseph

Joseph: But I had a dream, and in that dream I saw an angel who told me to take Mary as my wife and to care for the child as if he were my own son.

Simeon: You're crazy man – do you know what people are going to say about you? I'm not surprised your family have disowned you. Give up on this woman and her child – they're not your problem.

Joseph: I can't Simeon, and more to the point I won't. I know you think I'm crazy, but I believe that this is God's child – that's what the Angel told me; I've got a job to do and I am going to see it through.

Simeon: Joseph – will you listen to yourself. What's got into you?

Joseph: Like I said – God has given me this responsibility and I'm going to see it through – whatever it costs me.

Simeon: But Joseph – who on earth can be worth doing that for?