

18This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. 19Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

22All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

24When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Even if you've never actually met my friend Joe Davidson, you've probably known someone like him in your life. Perhaps it was a neighbor or a teacher, an uncle or a friend. Someone who—though named Matt or Bill or Bob—was just a regular old Joe who, as my grandmother would say, "Would just do anything for you." He's the guy who shows up to dig your car out of the ditch or helps you move that old freezer out of the garage or cleans up after a church potluck when everyone else has gone home. He never wants anything in return—in fact he blushes every time you even say "Thank you." Most guys who are like Joe Davidson aren't famous, they're not well-known community leaders—they're just, well, regular Joes. But never has there been such a "Regular Joe" whose life became anything but regular, as my friend Joe Davidson.

Joe Davidson worked at a cabinet factory in a small town downstate. His dad had worked at that cabinet factory and his dad's dad worked at that cabinet factory. Every one in that small town knew the Davidson family and everybody liked Joe. He was homecoming king, football captain, and got pretty decent grades—good enough grades to get a college scholarship, but he turned it down. Folks in the town had always wondered if Joe would leave them to pursue the ivory towers of the U of State, but not Joe—Joe liked their little town and planned to live there—just as his father and grandfather before him—until the day he died. And so, he worked at the cabinet factory during the day and drove to the community college in the next town over in the evenings as he took courses for a degree in business.

Joe, being a handsome guy, had dated some nice girls throughout high school. But none ever really caught his interest—until he met Maryann. She was a few years younger than he was—she was still in high school when Joe began working at the factory. And even though she was young, they were in love. And so, the summer before Maryann's senior year of high school, just after Joe turned 21, Joe and Maryann got engaged. They were so excited and a few years down the road, planned to buy a house and start a family in their little hometown.

One afternoon, Maryann called Joe from the pay phone at the school and, through the tears in her voice, asked him to meet her at the back booth in the town's diner after school. Joe left work early to go meet her. When he got there, she was already in the back and he could tell that she was still crying. He hurried

back to comfort her and asked her what was wrong. And words cannot express the shock and dismay he felt with Maryann's reply. "Joe, oh Joe, I'm pregnant." Now, Joe and Maryann had never done what needs to be done in order for a girl to get pregnant, they had agreed to wait until they got married. Joe knew the baby wasn't his. As she sobbed, Joe explained to Maryann that he had to get out of there—he needed some fresh air. He'd call her tomorrow, after he'd had a chance to figure some things out.

Instead of going home, Joe went to the deserted old field where he used to play ball in high school. He walked the perimeter of the field, round and round he went, figuring out what to do. Of course he was hurt and angry—that's why he had to get out of the diner right away. He was about to lose his cool and knew that if he didn't get out, he'd do something he'd regret—like start yelling and humiliate Maryann in public. And though he was angry, he still loved her. She didn't deserve that kind of disgrace, it was already going to be hard enough for her in a small town like this. And so his plan was just to give her the money he had saved up for their wedding. After all, she wasn't his girl anymore so there wouldn't be a wedding. And even though the baby wasn't his, at least it would have what it needed. And then, because he couldn't stand the thought of seeing Maryann all over town with another man's kid, he'd quit his job at the cabinet factory and transfer to U of State. He'd try for a fresh start there.

By the time Joe had this all figured out, the sun had set, it had started to snow, and Joe couldn't stop shivering from the cold that had set in deep in his bones. His stomach growled with hunger and his face was covered with the salty residue of his tears. But, he knew what he had to do—close out his savings account, give the money to Maryanne, get through the holiday with his mom, and then pack up to leave for State. Joe had a plan.

"20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

And so it was that Joe Davidson, Joseph Son of David, just a regular old Joe trying to do the right thing, returned to Mary, stayed with her through a difficult birth, and raised that child as his own son. Joseph made room in his home and in his heart for that baby and, in so doing he became, not just a regular old Joe, but Joseph, part of the greatest story ever told.