



By Bradley Kirsten



What About Joseph?

I've been a parent now for almost 3 years. It feels like quite an achievement and I'm waiting for that knock on the door when someone from somewhere is going to present me and my lovely wife with the gold medals we feel we so richly deserve. I don't think that's going to happen, but we live in hope. Ok, on a more serious note, parenting has been the toughest assignment of my life by far. Men have for thousands of years had to do what I'm up to right now, and with fewer resources and no NCAP Tested Euro Approved car booster seat. What about Joseph? You know, Mary's husband. He was a dad too, and under the strangest circumstances. We've become so blasé about what this poor man had to go through spiritually and emotionally that when we recite the nativity story and its peripheral bits and pieces, we don't even spare this poor man a thought. So much is rightfully said about Mary, and we get why, but let's spare a thought for old Joseph. Despite the story that Mary told him about being pregnant and by an immaculate conception no less, he stuck by her. We read it like it's nothing but can you imagine his pain and disappointment at the news initially? He must have had plans for his and Mary's futures; hopes and dreams of maybe being married and travelling together and starting a family, all the while establishing his carpentry business. It was the culmination of what he and Mary would have discussed while staring lovingly into each other's eyes, their future mapped out with dedication to each other, and to God. Immaculate Conception? How do you deal with that? Do you even believe it at first? Imagine that knot in his stomach. His Mary...pregnant! Hey, spare a thought for ol' Joseph.

I think Joseph showed incredible faith, love and dedication. That's a whole lot more than many fathers today, and some of them may not even have been swayed by an angelic visitation. Selfishness, pride and ego are just that strong. Joseph was a man of courage and selflessness. He didn't want to disgrace Mary (Matt 1:19). He didn't want to experience divorce and after having been given instructions by God he still married her (Matt 1:24). I'm tired of hearing men that have deserted their families when things got too tough. They see only their paths and not

what God might want to do with them and through them. "This is not how I imagined things would be..." or "I had other plans for my life..." It's 'my ego' here and 'my identity' there. What did Joseph have in his heart? Let's consider Joseph's role in Jesus' life. He must have taught him so much; how to use the tools and how to honour His elders and His mother. Maybe he taught Him how to carve a toy horse, or how to be responsible, how to cope with his thoughts and actions as the Son of God and this while being so different from the other kids in the neighbourhood. All the while, Joseph was instilling these values in a young man that called him dad, but not Father. That takes some courage. Even when he was told to up and leave with his family in the middle of the night, to not protect himself, but Jesus, and head to Egypt, he did. You get the feeling he didn't waver in his dedication. Did he ever wonder if all this fuss around Jesus was worth it? I'm sure there were dark moments; he was only human.

Joseph, from the start, chose God's plans over his own. Looking at Joseph's attitude; how content would you be to give up your own desires to pursue God's for your life? Your plans versus God's plan. Your ideas of your purpose, versus what God wants to release you into.

I'm feeling really challenged by this and I think so much of Isaiah Chapter 6. We don't read too many of Joseph's thoughts and behind the scenes goings on, but what if he at some point in his life prayed a prayer similar to Isaiah's? Could the senior carpenter have said to his God: "Here I am Lord, please use me!"?

Imagine what God may have planned for you! Could it be that your greatest dream for your own life may only be the starting point of what God has in mind for you? Don't just imagine it. Let go of your own plans so that God can take His rightful place at the helm and then watch the launch of, not just a good life, but the best one that He has planned for you. It's most likely exceedingly and abundantly more than you could ever hope for or imagine. That's a promise.