

She Wasn't Carrying His Child, but He Loved Her and Married Her

By Wade F. Horn

He was a relatively young man, and had a difficult decision to make. It wasn't too long ago that they had first met. And from the moment he laid eyes on her, he just knew she was the one. After a brief courtship, he asked her to marry him. To his delight she said yes, and they quickly began making plans for the wedding.

Neither of them was from a wealthy family, and so the wedding wasn't going to be an elaborate one, just a few friends and relatives, maybe some wine and a bit to eat. But that didn't matter. It wasn't the wedding he was looking forward to, it was the marriage. He, a rather ordinary fellow, was going to marry the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. He couldn't imagine being any happier.

But then, something unimaginable happened. She became pregnant and he wasn't the father.

When his friends learned of this state of affairs, they counseled him to call off the wedding. How could you even think of marrying her, they asked. She's already beginning to show. Everyone will know. Think of your reputation.

Besides, they said, times were hard. Don't you have enough to worry about without taking the added responsibilities of a wife pregnant with someone else's child? No one would blame you, they assured him, if you called the whole thing off. After all, there's lots of fish in the ocean. Find someone else to marry – someone with less, well, you know, baggage.

He had to admit they had a point. No one would blame him if he canceled a marriage to a pregnant woman. This wasn't his fault. Why should he have to suffer because of her situation?

And times were hard. Services for struggling families were few. And although taxes were high, they mostly went to benefit the wealthy. Making matters worse, the local political situation was pretty unstable. Some of the most recent policies, he was told, might even be downright dangerous – especially to young families. Better to wait to get married until things settled down a bit.

And what if he did go ahead and marry her? What then? Would he resent her for putting him through this for the rest of his life? And what about the baby? What if he couldn't bring himself to love the child? That wouldn't be very fair to the baby, now would it?

But something told him none of that really mattered. He loved her and couldn't imagine living without her. He would grow to love this child, he told himself. He would have to.

So they got married. And soon thereafter, the child was born. A son.

A good many visitors came by to see his wife's new son. Some he couldn't ever recall ever having seen before, but familiar or not, he invited them all in to see his wife's newborn child. And as he looked down upon his bride holding the newborn child, he knew – just knew – he had made the right decision. He would be a father to this child, he told himself. He just would.

The years went by, and by all accounts he was an excellent father, doing all those things that fathers and sons do. He took the boy fishing, talked with him about life, even taught him the family business. And despite the fact that neither he nor his wife ever pretended he was the boy's real father, the boy grew to love and honor him as well.

The boy eventually grew into a fine young man, the kind of man that would make any father proud. And even after it became clear that his wife's son would not enter the family business, his love for this child of another stood steadfast and strong, as did his love and faithfulness to his wife.

Although the son would die at a relatively young age, his reputation lasted well past his death. Indeed, his life changed history.

But so did the stepfather; the man who decided to forgo prejudice and marry an already pregnant woman out of faith and love. And in doing so, Joseph, husband of Mary and earthly father to Jesus, provided an example to men everywhere and throughout time of the extraordinary power that faithfulness in marriage and loving, devoted fatherhood has to literally change the world – one child at a time.