

I. Introduction.

A. Tonight we're going to look ever so briefly at the life of Mary and Joseph of Nazareth (a city in Galilee, Luke 1:26), Jesus' parents, and the unique calling on their lives to bear, birth and bring up the very Son of God. Their story helps us understand—in some small way—the unusual dynamics surrounding a birthing of God's purposes such as in our personal life and vocation/ministry.

B. Let's read **Luke 1:26-38, 45: 2:7, 33-35**.

C. Let's try to imagine, just for a moment, what it was like for both Mary and Joseph...

- First of all, I really think that Jesus likes to talk about His mom and dad.
- Imagine you're an ordinary Jewish teenage girl (Nazareth, 2,000 years ago) and an angel tells you you're pregnant.
- Imagine telling people like close family, friends and neighbors, let alone your fiancée Joseph, "I'm pregnant by a miracle! The Holy Spirit did it!"
- Imagine the life Mary lived and what she had to put up with. All the whispers, the condescension. Sure, there were the dreams, the angels and the prophetic words, but there were certainly scornful looks from without and the doubts and sorrowful moments within—a sword that would pierce her heart many times.
- Imagine what Joseph has to go through. He had to believe his wife and the angel. He had to accept the abnormal life that is the result of what they were suddenly invited into.
- Both Mary and Joseph could have said no, but they said yes.

II. God still looks for those like Mary and Joseph.

A. Let's think of it in these terms: for the greatest move of God in world history to be birthed, somebody had to carry it to term. Someone had to bear being misunderstood and mischaracterized and even demonized so that God's will would be done on earth. Someone had to be the "highly favored" (Luke 1:28) one that would accept the piercings of the sword of difficulty. So it is with all who say yes to God's highest purposes.

III. What about you?

A. Are you willing to let God interrupt your life and fill it with all sorts of difficulties for the sake of His greater purposes?

B. Are you willing to bear the stigma—the mark of disgrace—associated with what God has called you to be? (I've heard many Christians speak of what they're going to do one day in their service to Jesus who never get around to it.)

C. Are you willing to raise the Baby? Which means to be a true father or mother (1 Corinthians 4:15) who sticks around when it's hard? Are you willing to accept that challenge?

- The typical modern church culture is to give up on churches, ministries and one another when it's hard.
- The typical attitude toward prayer is that we give up when our prayers aren't answers on our timetable.
- Are we willing to be atypical, like Mary and Joseph, and stick with it—through the messy birth, the routine seasons, the glorious times, the crucifying moments. Will we do the hard work of raising the Baby—what God has called us to personally—instead of the easy work of slipping out the side door when its crying and needs a diaper change? Will you stick around when seasons change and you lack understanding.
- This Christmas, as we celebrate Jesus, let's also remember the teenage mom who said yes and wouldn't quit. Let's be like her.

Help me improve my notes! The first person to point out a legitimate mistake/typo on this document (during service) gets \$1.

Greater Peoria House of Prayer Announcements for December 22, 2020.

1. **Welcome** to the Greater Peoria House of Prayer... we're glad you're here and blessed to be worshipping God with you! Be sure to pick up the **free** materials at the back table in the prayer room or the desk near the front of the downstairs fellowship area, which includes teaching notes, stickers, pens, prayer cards and more. **Daily schedule:** We have morning prayer right here in this room seven days a week from 7-8 a.m. Monday - Friday and 8-9 a.m. Saturday and Sunday. We have afternoon prayer four days a week: Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 11:30 a.m. - noon. We have evening prayer with live worship from 6-8 p.m. Monday - Saturday. On Friday's, we have an extra prayer gathering from 10 a.m. - noon. Our **Friday Encounter Night** is from 6-9 p.m. and is our main corporate gathering each Friday evening featuring live worship and a teaching to inspire love for Jesus and prayer.
2. **UPCOMING EVENTS:** We're open from 7-8 p.m. every night seven days a week. Hope to gather with you in prayer!
3. **Prayer room ministry opportunities:** If you are interested in leading or ministering during a live worship set by singing, playing an instrument, prayer leading or behind the sound board, please contact us at info@gphop.org. We'd love to have you serve on one of our teams! **Team ministry opportunities:** If you feel the Lord has gifted you in the prophetic (or would like to grow in this gifting) and would consider helping on a prophetic team, send an email to info@gphop.org. Contact Mandy Kistner at mandy@gphop.org if you would like to schedule a future healing ministry appointment or help out on the healing team.
4. **Missions:** Please keep the following missionaries we support in prayer as well as be sensitive to their financial needs: **Ashley Bucknam** (YWAM, Hawaii); **Alicia Wright** (India); **Tim and Blair Fraim** (Florianopolis House of Prayer; Florianopolis, Brazil); **Eric and Erin Simmons** (Minnesota House of Prayer Network; Twin Cities, MN); **Austin and Amy Zhu** and **Phil Kellenberger** (International House of Prayer; Kansas City, MO); **Babett Mueller** (111 Global; Kansas City, MO). Also keep friends **Tyler and Sarah Cook** and family in prayer who lead the Illinois Valley House of Prayer in Ottawa, IL.
5. **Military:** Please keep the following members of our military in prayer as they valiantly serve the United States of America: **Jake Gerst**, currently stationed in Grafenwoehr/Grafenwöhr, Germany.
6. **Social media:** Follow us on Facebook (Greater Peoria House of Prayer - GPHOP), Twitter (@GPHOPrayer), Instagram (@GPHOPrayer), Vimeo and YouTube for regular updates and inspiration. Use these social media sites to get the word out, share pictures, quotes you heard, etc. Contact Derek at derek@gphop.org if you're interested in helping with GPHOP's social media.
7. **Haven ministries:** Do you need space to pray just one-on-one. Maybe your Christian group needs a place to meet every once in awhile. We're making available the upper Prayer Room and lower-level Gathering Grounds for rent by donation. Email info@gphop.org if interested.
8. We provide **free Wi-Fi** to everyone here! The password for the **GPHOP** router is on the chalkboard in the downstairs fellowship area. You can also connect to either the CableWiFi or xfinitywifi routers if you have a personal Comcast account.
9. **Prayer requests:** If you would like our community to pray for something specific, please submit it to info@gphop.org.
10. **Giving:** If you have been blessed by the GPHOP and would like sow financially into the ministry, we would be more than blessed. You can give in cash, but if you would like to give to GPHOP with a check, please make it out to "Greater Peoria House of Prayer" or "GPHOP"—your gift is tax deductible. Thank you for your generosity! It's helping make day and night prayer with worship possible in central Illinois. You can place your gift in the Saturday night offering during the 7 p.m. teaching or drop it in either of the two black donation boxes. Donations can also be mailed to our physical address at 117 East Washington Street, East Peoria, IL 61611. Donors can also use PayPal or our website (gphop.org/donate) to give electronically.

*Thank you for helping to **keep this prayer room sacred** by ensuring conversations with others are brief and kindly reminding others to do the same. Use the large Gathering Grounds fellowship area downstairs if you would like to chat at length.*