



WARM UP

Joseph

What is one thing other people are afraid of that you are not?

SET IT UP

Whether it's public speaking or claustrophobia everyone is afraid of something. Our fears, though personal, are not typically unique. Fear always attacks us right where our faith lives and keeps us from stepping into the plans God has for us. We see this most clearly through the Christmas story where ordinary people address fear in an extraordinary ways. Joseph was one of those people.

CHAT IT UP

1. **Anyone know what the latest tabloid headlines are this week? Why do you think our society is so drawn to scandal and gossip?**
2. **Read Matthew 1:18-25. What happened to Mary while she and Joseph were engaged?** (Answer: She became pregnant.)
3. **How did Joseph plan to handle the situation?** (Answer: He was going to divorce Mary.) **What did he end up doing instead? Why?** (Answer: He obeyed God and took Mary as his wife.)
4. God asked Mary and Joseph to do something hard, in spite of what others would think. **How does it feel to be the victim of untrue rumors and gossip?**
5. **How does our desire for approval or acceptance keep us from doing what is right?**
6. **What difficult, hard-to-swallow command of God have you obeyed or need to obey?**

WRAP IT UP

You can be captive to the crowd or captivated by Christ but you cannot be both. Will you listen to the opinions of people or will you listen to God? You can't please everyone but you can please One. Get out of that self-made slammer by obeying the one who knows you best and loves you most.

LEADER TIPS

- Throughout this series we will be talking about how fears keep us “locked up” and how Christ frees us. As the leader, set the tone for this study by being real with your fears. Your authenticity will be a model for the rest of the group.