

Hey Southwood Family,

Talking about the virgin birth of Jesus may come up with your kids this time of year because it's referenced in the Christmas story in both Matthew 1 and Luke 1 as well as in many classic Christmas carols. Since we're directly discussing it Sunday (Matthew 1:18-25), here are some thoughts on shepherding your kids through these issues toward their special Savior. Remember, God made you these kids' parents, so embrace these conversations rather than avoiding them. God loves your kids and loves to work through parents – even if you don't have all the answers!

*Really Young Kids:* With our youngest kids, of course, many don't think twice so you can talk about it when they get older and just focus for now on the wonder of Jesus' incarnation as the Son of God born for us. Often when they're just asking out of confusion, you can explain that while there are exceptions, God's design is for babies to be born when a mother and father are married – so Mary being pregnant before she is married (and perhaps as young as 13) is a special miracle that God worked because this was a special birth of a special baby.

*The Messy Middle:* Likely the most complicated stage here is those kids who are asking lots of questions, connecting lots of dots, but still haven't had "the talk" yet (Hint: If they're really asking a lot of questions, they may be getting closer to "the talk" than you had hoped!). Rather than dodging, avoiding, or (worse) criticizing their questions, try to direct the answers toward the special nature of Jesus. Perhaps highlight that because God is Jesus' father, He didn't need an earthly father to be born; rather, the Bible tells us, God (the Holy Spirit) miraculously put a baby in Mary's tummy. This is the only time that God has ever been born, so a unique baby means a unique birth that the Bible highlights (i.e. that's why Joseph and Mary were both so surprised they needed angels to visit to tell them what was happening!).

*Older Kids:* Perhaps you're not even thinking of your teenagers in this conversation. But this might be a good opportunity with them, too. One caution would be not to use this story as a way to shame them toward sexual purity ("good things happen to virgins" or the like); that's NOT the point here! But perhaps the idea of shame (put yourself in Joseph's shoes, for example) is a good place to start. Thankfully, Joseph and Mary had no reason to be ashamed, but Jesus was coming to earth to remove our shame by taking it on Himself on the cross.

See you Sunday,

Pastor Will