

1996 Christmas Program
Submitted by Joy Erskine

(Audience in darkness. Setting lighted.)

(Joe and Mike are fishing together off the pier on a Saturday morning. Joe snags his line and it breaks. He fumes and fusses around trying to rehook his line.)

Mike: "What's with you this morning, Joe? You ain't done a thing right since we got here! If you don't settle down, we're never gonna get any fish!"

Joe: "Oh, I guess I'm too preoccupied with Marie to be any good. Mike, you got any good advice about women?"

Mike: "Sure, I got lots of advice about women! Just ask me, I got an answer! It's never the right one, but I got lots of 'em! Whatcha wanna know?"

Joe: "I must be crazy, talking to you about something that involves Marie. I'll screw things up for sure if I listen to you! Do me a favor, Mike, don't advise me, just hear me out. I gotta talk to someone; even you will do for that."

Mike: "Thanks for the vote of confidence, Bud. I love you, too!"

Joe: "Well, love is what it's all about. I love Marie, dang it! And I know she loves me. I want her to marry me, but that's where I get drawn up short. She wants to marry of her own faith, which leaves me hanging out to dry!"

Mike: "Well, so what? If you want to marry her, join up. What's the big deal? It doesn't mean you have to practice it, you know!"

Joe: "No, you didn't hear me the first time -- I said I love her. I don't want to deceive her into marrying me. I want her to love me back, forever."

Mike: "Okay, so what's the real question?"

Joe: "Well, I'm not "un"-religious, you know. I believe in a supreme being, even though I'm not much involved with "church," as such. But Marie is different. I think that's part of why I love her. It makes me wonder if there isn't something about her beliefs that I should believe too. But, for cryin' out loud, how would a guy like me know what to believe in?"

Mike: "Man, I didn't know what I was gettin' into here, did I? Do I look like, what's that Greek guy's name?, . . . Aphrodite?, uh, Achilles?... oh, yeah -- Aristotle!! A philosopher! Do I look like a philosopher?"

Joe: "Well, now that you mention it..."

(Mike throws a handful of worms at Joe and the scene ends.)
(TRANSITION SONG HERE)

(Joe is sitting at the kitchen table having fish for dinner. His mother is keeping him company as he eats.)

Joe: "Thanks, Mom. I should've been home for dinner so you wouldn't have to fix it twice. It's been kind of an off day for me."

Mom: "Oh, that's okay. Your dad's busy watching an old movie I'm not interested in anyway. How did your day go? Did you and Mike catch very many?"

Joe: "Oh, we caught a few." (Joe picks up a spoon and dips into the sugar bowl.) "Not as many as we normally would have, though. I kept dropping things and snagging my line, just stuff like that. Couldn't keep my mind on what I was doing."

Mom: "Kind of like now? You know you're getting ready to sprinkle sugar on your fish? Is there something wrong?"

Joe: (Drops the sugar spoon in recognition.) "Ch-ee-e-sh! Oh, yes and no. It's this thing with Marie and me. I know there's got to be an answer; I just can't seem to figure it out. What do you do when you have something important on your mind, Mom? Marie is special, and I don't want to lose her to someone else. But I don't want to commit to something I'm not sure of, either. That wouldn't be good for either of us."

Mom: "Well, it seems to me that if you have a question, you should look for the answer at the source. When I can't remember what ingredients to use in something I want to make for dinner, I look through my recipe books. When your dad needs to know how to fix something on the car, the first thing he does is check the Chilton manual. I expect when you have a question about faith, the Bible is where you'd probably find an answer."

Joe: "Well, yeah ... Why didn't I think of that? Thanks, Mom. I should've talked to you first-- Mike and I would've had a lot better luck at fishing today!"

(Scene fades out; returns with Joe sitting at the kitchen table with the Bible. It's getting late.)

Joe: "I've been reading for hours. I know it's got to be in here somewhere. Please, God, let me find the answer I'm looking for."

(Joe leans his head on his hand to continue reading, and his head slowly lowers as he falls asleep.)

(Enter Joseph as in Joe's dream.)

Joseph: "Greetings, friend. I am Joseph of Nazareth, son of Heli. I have been walking for a long time, trying to think. My heart is very heavy and I have need to talk; wilt thou listen? "I trace my ancestry from David through two family lines, but I am not a rich man. My home is one of many box-like houses huddled close together in Nazareth, a small, unwalled town on the side of a small hill. Nazareth is some distance from the main road. At it's highest point stands a simple one-story synagogue. Two hundred people live there; most of them are farmers. I am one of a few who work as craftsmen.

"I am to wed Mary, the daughter of my uncle, Jacob. Mary was twelve when we became betrothed. Our parents arranged our marriage and we are nearing the end of our betrothal year. Mary has been living in

her father's house, but she bears the social status of a married woman because we are to marry. Soon it will be the time for our wedding, and she will move into my house and become my wife. (Pauses.) I should be very happy but, several days ago, Mary confided in me that she is with child. (Pauses again.) I am not the father. Mary tells me the angel Gabriel came to her and told her that she would conceive a child. He said the child would be holy because his father was God, and that he would be called the Son of God. I would like to believe her, but I also know that, in Galilee, the occupying Roman troops rape or seduce even betrothed virgins at will. I am not sure what to believe.

"I do know that the law is harsh, and a charge of seduction or adultery is serious business. The law of Moses demands that a conviction result either in death by stoning or, more likely, in a degrading "divorce." Such a thing would subject Mary to physical and emotional abuses and public scandal. And she would face a bleak future. I am just a man. I care for Mary and I am not willing to make her a public example. What shall I do? I want to believe her, but how will I know if the child is holy, as she tells me?"

(SONG HERE -- Nativity Song)
(Gabriel steps up behind Joseph, startling him.)

Joseph: "Oh! Who art thou? An angel come to punish me?"

Gabriel: "I am Gabriel. I come to comfort your heart in the matters of which thou hast spoken. Joseph, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Joseph: "Mary, my wife? And her holy child mine to call Son? It is too great a thing for me. I am not worthy. If I take Mary as my wife and name the child, he will be my son, my adopted son as the law prescribes. Surely there is a mistake!"

Gabriel: "God maketh no mistake, Joseph. Thy wife, Mary, is the chosen vessel, and thou art chosen as the child's earthly father. Take comfort in these words and go and do what thou knowest thou must."

(Gabriel fades away into departure.)

Joseph: "It is true! The child is holy. I know now this is as it must be. And Mary has been true to me, her husband, in all things. Blessed is Mary for living in faith! I know by the fullness of my heart that these things are true. I will go to her straightaway and tell her I believe her words. All will be well..."

(SONG HERE -- Dona Nobis)

(Mom walks back into the kitchen in her nightclothes and shakes Joe awake.)

Mom: "Joe, Joe, wake up and go on to bed. It's after midnight. What are you doing down here so late?"

Joe: "Oh, Mom! I found it! I found the answer! It was right here in the Bible, like you said it would be. If Marie's church is the right church, I'll be able to tell now. Joseph said I'd know by the feeling in my heart. I can't wait to talk to Marie! In the morning I'll surprise her and meet her at church. I'm on the right track now, Mom, I know it!"

(SONG HERE -- I Shall Know Him When He Comes)

(SONG HERE --- Stars Were Gleaming)

(SONG HERE -- Christmas Morning)

(Lights go up; audience participates in singing Christmas hymns to close out the program.)