

a message on a tombstone

Ray Pritchard, president of *Keep Believing Ministries* in Elmhurst, Illinois, and author of 27 books, tells of visiting a graveyard with his brother in a rural area near Florence, Alabama.

They drove along a remote country road and finally stopped near the ruins of an antebellum plantation. They got out of the car and walked into the forest about a quarter of a mile. There, they found the family cemetery for the owners of the 19th century plantation.

They climbed over a low wall and began inspecting the gravestones, most of them 150 years old. Nearly all the markers contained phrases like *Loving Father, Beloved Mother, Darling Son, Rest in Peace, Asleep in Jesus*, and so on.

Eventually, they came to the grave of the man who had owned the plantation for many years. Under his name there was the date of his birth and the date of his death. Then there was a five-word statement that summed up his whole life:

A man of unquestioned integrity

Nothing more. Nothing less.

What a powerful tribute to the life of any man (or woman)!

Those words on the tombstone could have been etched on the grave of Joseph, Mary's husband in the Christmas story. He was a man of integrity and faith. Consider ...

An angel came to Joseph in a dream and told him not to be afraid of taking Mary as his wife, even though she was with child. Matthew tells us, "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife." And when an angel came and told him to take Mary and the child and flee into Egypt, Matthew said, "So Joseph got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt."

That was Joseph. A man of integrity, a man of faith. Do you think it might make a difference if all the people who call Jesus Lord had that kind of integrity, that kind of complete trust in God's will and God's way?

My guess is that it would change the world overnight.

Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out (Proverbs 10:9 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter