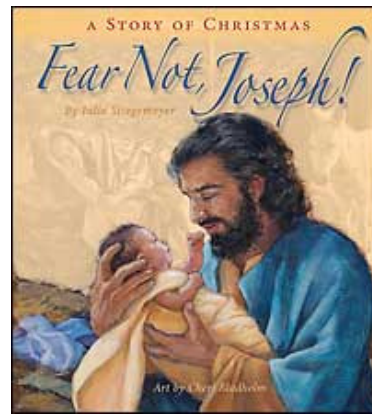


Author: Julie Stiegemeyer
Illustrator: Cheri Bladholm
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I wanted to extend a word of thanks to Rosemary Parkinson at Concordia Publishing House for providing me with a review copy of Julie Stiegemeyer's *Fear Not, Joseph!*.

If you were to talk to the average person on the street about the Christmas story and ask them to rank the three main characters by order of importance, I'm willing to bet that most people would put Jesus first, Mary second, and Joseph third. Strictly from an information perspective, we know much more about Jesus and Mary than we do about Joseph. The little bit we do know about Joseph comes from the gospels. Julie Stiegemeyer builds on that little bit of information, largely from the gospels of Matthew and Luke to tell us the Christmas story from Joseph's perspective.

Throughout this short story, Joseph has much to be afraid of. His betrothed is pregnant. He has to travel many miles to Bethlehem with a wife who is about to give birth. Upon his arrival at Bethlehem, there is no place for them to stay, so they must take up lodging in a stable. In his own strength, Joseph wouldn't have been able to overcome these fears, but throughout the story Joseph is comforted by the words God sent to him in a dream, "Fear not, Joseph!" In God's strength, Joseph is able to overcome the many obstacles that stand before him.

Julie Stiegemeyer offers us a unique opportunity to catch a glimpse into some of the emotions and experiences Joseph must have had in the nine months leading up to the birth of Jesus. The text flows well and is appropriate for the suggested audience of five to nine year olds. Cheri Bladholm's illustrations are stupendous. The emotion captured on Mary & Joseph's faces throughout the book tell us almost as much as the text of the story. I was also quite pleased to see that the background scenery is appropriate for the time period. The great writing and wonderful illustrations make this a truly excellent book. Your children will be delighted with this story, should you choose to share it with them this Christmas season.

Julie Stiegemeyer writes books for children and adults. In addition to writing, she also enjoys teaching music to children at her church. Julie lives in Fort Wayne, Indiana, with her husband, Scott, and son, Jacob.

Cheri Bladholm has illustrated many picture books. Her artwork displays her strong Christian faith and illuminates God's message for her readers. She lives in Syracuse, New York, with her husband and their children.