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**“UNSHACKLED!” - Pacific Garden Mission**  
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**Daily Devotional**

*“Sovereign” – Richard Maffeo*

ANNCR: December 25<sup>th</sup>, “Sovereign.” Before we dive in, I’d like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas! It’s such a beautiful time of year, celebrating the birth of our Savior. But have you ever looked closely at the Christmas story? For Mary and Joseph, things didn’t go as planned. When Mary first became pregnant, Joseph, believing it was a mistake, decided to divorce her quietly. Until an angel assured him that God’s plan was truly at work in this unique situation. When we can’t see the purpose in our circumstances, we may be tempted to doubt God, even resorting to our own methods of “making it right.” But our intentions likely aren’t as noble as Joseph’s, and we may simply be seeking control. Such was the life of Richard Maffeo. Until the message of Christmas – and the prophecies that pointed to it – changed everything. Here’s Richard to share with us his true story on this Unshackled Daily Devotional.

RICHARD: Many friends didn’t realize I was Jewish. I grew up thinking Christians were polytheistic idol worshippers, and I was sure that Jesus Christ was anti-Semitic. During my teen years I went

through a lot of inner loneliness, but I put up a big front. To avoid going to Vietnam, I went to college where I took up drug use, mostly LSD.

In 1970 I went back to New York and drove a cab. I became friends with a fellow cabbie who moved to Colorado, where I followed him. We schemed to make money dishonestly, even pulling a burglary. Well, I saw this was a dead-end life and, in desperation I joined the navy, where I learned electronics. My instructor was studying for the ministry, and we had some very lengthy discussions about God. He urged me to read a best-selling book about Biblical prophecy.

A few months later I borrowed the recommended book and, sure enough, I read about prophecies in Isaiah that predicted the coming Messiah. So I went out and bought a Hebrew Bible to check the accuracy of what I read. It was accurate. Then I joined a Bible study at the chaplain's home, where I learned more about God's love and grace. Finally, on Christmas Day, after finishing the prophecy book, I prayed, asking God to show me the truth. Jesus not only gave me the assurance of salvation and forgiveness for my sins, but the Lord has set me free of drugs and loneliness.

ANNCR: When the angel visited Joseph, confirming Mary's miraculous pregnancy, Matthew chapter 1, verse 22 says, "*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us').*" Friend, this prophecy was recorded roughly 700 years before Jesus' birth, yet it didn't fail. So if you find yourself questioning a difficult circumstance, Christmas is the perfect time to remember God's sovereignty – His understanding from beginning to end, and His matchless ability to orchestrate His good plan. He is truly King and Lord over all. Will you trust in this truth today?

CREDITS: Unshackled Daily Devotionals are produced by Pacific Garden Mission along with our Unshackled Audio Dramas. To find even more true stories of God's saving, transforming power, visit our website, [unshackled.org](http://unshackled.org).

This episode was written by Jack Odell and Elizabeth Kupferschmid and narrated by Tim Gregory and Jamie Barron.

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