

Joseph's Journey to Christmas

Matthew 1:18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). 24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

One thing we learn from Scripture is that God has a divine plan. In order to carry out that plan He uses men and women to do his work. Look at your hands. These are the hands God uses to care for the sick. Look at your feet. These are the feet God uses to spread his message of salvation. If you touch your mouth, this is the mouth God uses to edify his people. So, when God was ready to provide salvation for a world full of sin, he needed someone he could trust to be the earthly father of the Savior of the world. He chose Joseph.

Joseph, a man who finds himself in a peculiar situation. He is betrothed to a woman of whom he has never laid with, but now she is pregnant. Having been engaged myself as a young man, I can imagine the anticipation of being engaged. The joy of knowing your wife who has been waiting on you her whole life and you have been waiting on her to seal this agreement, the covenant of marriage. Waiting a year to touch his wife and in his excitement, waiting and anticipating ... Joseph gets the word... Mary's Pregnant.

What do you mean she is pregnant?!? NO, no, no, not my sweet little Mary!!! I can imagine the advice he was given.

The text does not say who found her but seeing that she was more than likely staying with her family, her father and mother most likely noticed something was different and Mary the innocent little girl that she was, tried to tell her family that an angel told her that her child was of the Holy spirit. But somehow for some reason they did not believe her.

I can see Mary's father calling Joseph's father and saying, my little girl is pregnant, now according to the Law she lies in Joseph's hands, now I know what the options are, but I just want to express my desire to keep our name clean I know what you have to do, but I would like to keep my reputation straight. I can see Joseph's father saying, you know how hard it would be for me to show my face. You know how hard on my family it would be, so please take that into consideration. It's bad enough my baby is pregnant.

Any warm-blooded man in that situation would find it difficult at best to go on with the plan of marriage, but Joseph gives us a picture of what it looks like to be used by God to carry a royal responsibility.

What a perplexing situation to be in. What I hope we learn from Joseph today is, When God calls on us to carry out his plan, it requires an unwavering trust in God's power and trust in His will. If you don't trust His power, you will doubt if he is able. If you don't trust His will, you won't believe He knows what is best.

God saw something in him that made Him believe he could put His most prized possession in his hands. Come on parents, let's be honest... There are some people you just will not let watch your kids. Then there are others whom you can leave them with and not feel you have to check on them. God saw something in Joseph that shows he could leave His son in his care. He shows us that he is able to be used by God to carry out His plan. How do you show God you are able to be used by Him to do great things for His glory? There are 6 quick lessons I believe Joseph teaches us about being used by God for His purpose. Yeah, I know, I saw our normal three and doubled it, don't worry 6 quick points.

First of all, to prove you can handle a God given responsibility, you must...

1. Consistently Choose to do what is Right.

Matt1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

The NASB version says "Not wanting to disgrace her planned to send her away secretly"

The text tells us that Joseph and Mary were betrothed. To be betrothed in the Jewish culture was more of a contract. More binding than just being engaged. So much so that the male and female would be acknowledged as husband and wife. We see this in verse 19 where he is referred to as "her husband" From the point of betrothal and actual consummation of the marriage would usually be a period of one year. The year was to prove purity on the part of the woman. If she was to become pregnant during this time of purity, it would be considered adultery. And the laws of adultery were that if a woman was found in adultery she could be taken and stoned to death. But Joseph, being labeled in the text as a just man, a righteous man, chose to do the right thing.

Understand assuredly Mary tried to tell him what the angel had told her, but Joseph has an inkling of doubt.

But you can understand Joseph as possibly thinking Mary is trying to come up with excuses for this condition, she is in. Instead of getting angry and seeking an opportunity to get even. He chose to do the right thing and send her away quietly. Literally means divorce her in the presence of two or three witnesses rather than take her before the courts where her and her family's reputation would be ruined, but also her life would be at stake.

The word "just", also translated as righteous, here defines one who has conditioned himself by a standard that is not his, but God's.

The problem in our society today is that we have what I call selective morality-that means we will do what is right as long as doing what is right will be to my benefit.

Studies say that 50% of the people today will steal if the opportunity presented themselves even if they were not a "thief". You get undercharged at the register rather than bring it up you see it as a blessing and say nothing. You bought something from the store and broke it, and then try to box it up like you haven't used it and take it to the store and tell them it was like that out of the box.

If you want God to use you, you have to condition yourself to a standard that is God's and not your own. This means you might lose money...This means you might be vulnerable...This means you might look weak, but if God can trust you, He can use you.

To prove you can handle a God given responsibility, you must...1-Consistently choose what is right

2. Have Courage to stand in the face of Ridicule.

Matthew 1:20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

We can see Joseph's concern in how he initially wanted to handle the situation. He initially figured the best thing for both parties involved was a secret divorce that no one would know about so that they did not have to suffer ridicule.

He could hear his friends saying, "The word on the street is that Mary was pregnant before you lived together" He could see how his mother would look at her when they came over for dinner and how the child would never get a fair chance in the family.

Joseph knew what was at stake. This is why he sought to secretly put her away so that she would not suffer ridicule, but after the word of the angel. He decided that the ridicule was worth it. He decided that being talked about was a fair price for being in the will of God. He decided he could live with the awkward looks in light of the task he had of being the earthly father to the one who would save His people from their sins.

When me and my wife were foster parents, the kids would misbehave and draw attention in public, I often wanted to yell out, these are foster kids, hoping to get some verification and relief, mercy, but what I came to realize is that if this is what God called me to, then seeking to be accepted was not going to help my case and was actually prideful. God called us and we loved them like our own.

Joseph questioned whether he could handle what was to come, but if you want to be used by God you have to be ready to suffer at the hand of ridicule, awkward looks, gossip about you, jealousy toward you for moving in a direction that is not popular and for making a choice that is against the grain. If you feel God is directing you in a specific direction and it is not the norm, you have to be ready to be the topic of discussion.

To prove you can handle a God given responsibility, you must...1-Consistently choose what is right
2-Have courage to stand in the face of ridicule.

3. Have Confidence in the power of God.

The angel that appeared to Joseph in his dream said, Matt 1:20 "...Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

Mary was found with child, pregnant. Obviously, the word from Mary was not enough to convince him because he still wanted to put her away, but the Angel spoke to him.

At that point he had a decision to make. He could decide that this is impossible, and I don't want to risk my reputation and the life of my family. Understand, he still had to believe God was able to do such a miracle.

This is what caught my attention and drew me into Joseph's story. I like what happens after the angel came to him in his dream, verse 24 says, "he awoke and did." Not contemplate, not mull over the pros and cons. He showed His confidence in God's power to accomplish such a work that he threw his initial plans out of the window. And went immediately and took Mary as his wife.

Too many of us are waiting for it to make sense before we move on what God is showing us. Sometimes you have to follow God when it does not make sense. When the odds are against you.

You will not accomplish anything great for God if you do not believe he has the power to accomplish what he wants you to do.

God majors in the minors. He does His best work with people who don't have the power to accomplish the work themselves. I think about Gideon in the book of Judges when God called him to lead Israel into battle. He said I'm the youngest person in the weakest family. He had an army of 32,000 facing an army of 130,000 and God wanting to make sure there was no doubt this victory was the Lord's, took the 32,000 down to 300 and used Gideon to lead 300 men to defeat an army of over 130,000. So, He could show his power.

Joseph had to believe in God's power, to trust him and if you want to be used by God, you will too!

To prove you can handle a God given responsibility, you must...1-Consistently choose what is right
2-Have courage to stand in the face of ridicule.3-Have confidence in the power of God...

4. Comply with the word of God.

Matt 1:21 "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus" Matt 1:25 "He called His name Jesus"
Joseph accepted his wife was pregnant. He accepted it was of the Holy spirit. Joseph still had to follow the instruction of naming the Child Jesus.

In the genealogy in the first 17 verses of Matthew chapter 1, verse 16 does not list Jesus as His son, I'll read from verse 15 to get you to see what I'm saying.

Matthew 1:15 and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, 16 and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

You would expect Jacob the father of Joseph, Joseph the father of Jesus, or at least Joseph the father of Joseph junior, but Joseph did not have the privilege of being associated with Jesus in the genealogy other than the fact that he was married to Mary, his mother.

Now remember, when the angel spoke to Zechariah, this was the conversation: Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear **you** a son, and you shall call his name John.

The angel told Zechariah, your wife will bear you a son, the angel that spoke to Joseph told him, your wife will bear "A" son. There is personality in one calling – your son, there is productivity in the other calling- "A" son. And Joseph had to accept this was the word of God, this was the calling, and the best foot forward is to obey.

In the face of dealing with this child who is born that is not directly from him, not knowing at that time whether Mary would ever be pregnant again and pregnant by him, he had to choose to comply with the word given to him to name the baby Jesus.

Why name him Jesus? Well, you have had the Geek with the Greek, you have had the Lady with Logos, now you have the Homie with the Hebrew! The name Jesus in Hebrew is Yeshua, which is also translated Joshua. The name means "the Lord is salvation," so we see the Father wanted His Son to bear a name that announced His purpose. He is Emmanuel, God with us, who is the Lord of our salvation, Jesus. And it was Joseph's responsibility to make sure Jesus received this name at birth according to the word of the Lord.

If you want to be used by God, God has to trust you to follow His word, even when faced with the temptation to walk your own path, or when choosing to follow God's word may mean more work or less prestige from others.

Understand, Following God's word limits your chances of doing something you will regret later.

Following God's word will limit your chances of making mistakes. Some of us are praying for Answers that have already been answered.

How do I deal with this person that hurt me – The word tells us to forgive each other just as God in Christ has forgiven you.

How do I know if I made the right decision – The word tells us that the peace of God which passes all understanding will guard your heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

The word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths to give us direction as we walk through life and if you want to be used by God you have to comply to His word.

To prove you can handle a God given responsibility, you must...1-Consistently choose what is right
2-Have courage to stand in the face of ridicule.3-Have confidence in the power of God 4-Comply with the word of God.

5. Control yourself in the face of temptation.

Matt 1:24 When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, 25 but knew her not until she had given birth to a son.

He kept her a virgin until she gave birth...

As soon as it was settled that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit, he brought her into his house and did not consummate the marriage.

Get the picture, a young man like Joseph in the home with his new wife, yet he did not touch her. Notice it does not say he did not want to touch her. It says, he did not touch her.

If he had consummated the marriage before Jesus was born, then the Messiah would not have been born of a virgin. And if there is no virgin birth then there would not be an unblemished lamb. If the lamb is blemished, then the sacrifice would not be enough, and we would still be in our trespasses and sins. So, Joseph had to control himself and live in the house with his wife and not have sexual relations with her. That's self-control!

This is an area that has brought many marriages down, brought down many ministries, stifled many potential workers for God.

When you are chosen by God to do something great, you can believe temptation is on the way. If Satan can get you to succumb to temptation, he can halt any good thing God is trying to do through you. Temptation itself is not sin, but yielding to it is sin. That is why you have to have someone who holds you accountable.

Who do you let in your life, who can ask you the hard questions, like when is the last time you had your devotional time, are you keeping holy when you are alone, where were you last night. I have at least two men in my life that can call me and get in my face and look through my life. If you want to be used by God and carry God given responsibilities, you have to be able to control yourself in the face of temptation.

To prove you can handle a God given responsibility, you must...1-Consistently choose what is right
2-Have courage to stand in the face of ridicule.3-Have confidence in the power of God 4-Comply with the word of God 5-Control yourself in the face of temptation. Finally...

6. Concern yourself more with Jesus' name than your own.

Nowhere do we have recorded that Joseph used this opportunity for his own personal gain. He was married to Mary, the mother of the Messiah. He was responsible for raising and training the savior, but not once do we hear or read about an opportunistic attitude of Joseph to try to use this to lift himself to a higher standard of living.

In today's society where everyone is looking for social media content, Having a step son who is famous would be an opportunity to capitalize on this situation.

God has given some of us gifts and talents, we have to be careful not to use them to draw attention to ourselves and neglect the fact that the reason they were given to us was to point to the Savior.

We have to get a mentality that whatever I do I do it for the name of Jesus. To lift up the name of Jesus. We have to stop pointing to ourselves and start pointing to Jesus. The word tells us to do good works, so they will look at what we have done and glorify the Father.

As long as you point to self, God will minimize your impact, but when you point to God, He can use you for His glory.

We have to become mirrors that reflect glory to God.

Jesus understood this that's why he could say not my will by thy will be done.

Jesus took nails, thorns, and was buried because he was more concerned by God's will.

If you want to be used by God to do great things you have to be more concerned that Jesus is praised.

That was Joseph, who gave us a great picture of what we need to do to be ready to be used by God to do great things.

To prove you can handle a God given responsibility, you must...1-Consistently choose what is right

2-Have courage to stand in the face of ridicule.3-Have confidence in the power of God 4-Comply with the

word of God 5-Control yourself in the face of temptation. Finally, Concern yourself more with Jesus'

name than your own.

And the Church said Amen!