

Joseph, The Faithful Father of Jesus Christ

Part 2

December 8, 2024

Day 1: New Father

One moment that I will never forget no matter how long I live is the moment I walked out of the hospital and strapped Charlottes carseat into the back of our CRV. The hospital just let us leave with a baby and I felt like I had no idea what to do. Yet, God had given me my heart's longing. A child to parent for Him.

The sun was shining as we unloaded the car and brought our daughter home for the first time. I knew it was a God moment. My heart sang. But along with the song was also an awareness of the huge responsibility that was now mine. I knew I needed God's help to parent this child.

At Christmas time, my thoughts frequently turn to the time of Jesus' birth. Was Joseph gripped by that same kind of overflowing awe and thanksgiving? Did he draw Mary close to his side as they gazed at their newborn son? What was there in Joseph that God chose him to be Jesus' earthly father? What can I learn from him?

These questions and more have prompted me to read and research. As a father my curiosity and interest in the character of Joseph is great. He knew what it was to parent a child he did not father. But did he ever wonder? Did he ever feel inadequate? Did he ever doubt his own abilities? Did he ever gaze into the night sky wondering how he would do it?

We may never know the answers to these questions, but we can grasp some insight into his character by noting the pattern of his actions.

Day 2: First Mention of Joseph

Joseph is first mentioned in Matthew 1:18-25 where he is referred to as a righteous man.

¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^[a]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet^[b] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^[c] because he will save his people from their sins."

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"^[d] (which means "God with us").

²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

But this righteous man faced a heartbreaking dilemma at the news of his beloved's unexplainable pregnancy. Because Mary and Joseph were betrothed, Mary's apparent unfaithfulness carried a social stigma. According to Jewish civil law, Joseph had the right to divorce her and the authorities could have stoned Mary. He faced an extremely difficult choice.

What would he choose?

Day 3: God Intervenes

According to scripture, God appeared to him in a dream, telling him to carry through with his plans to marry Mary and revealing to him that her child would be the Messiah. Taking Mary and Jesus as his own was probably humiliating for him in the eyes of the community, but he chose to obey God. His actions reveal not only his strong principles but also his sensitivity and self discipline. This first act of obedience also indicates Joseph's responsiveness to God. He was a man of integrity who was willing to do God's will -- no matter what.

Although others may have disapproved with his decision, Joseph did what he knew was right. How many times as a parent have I needed to make decisions for my children - decisions not always met with approval? Difficult school decisions, discipline, setting healthy boundaries, etc. These problems face parents every day. Joseph's example is an encouragement to parents to obey God rather than to seek approval of others.

Joseph's tough choices were not over with that first dream. Joseph received yet another dream from God after Jesus' birth. In Matthew 2:13-15. God tells Joseph how to protect Jesus from Herod's wrath. Joseph, although not the natural father, was the legal father and responsible for Jesus' safety and well-being.

¹³ When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him."

¹⁴ So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, ¹⁵ where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Once more Joseph was receptive to God's guidance, and he obeyed. He took Mary and the child to Egypt, where God enabled him to provide for his family. Is it too much to believe that God will enable us as well to provide for our children? As a parent, I too have experienced moments of financial concern, but God has always provided for us. What He has done in the past I am sure He will do in the future. These precious children are His and He will continue to give us guidance in providing for them.

Day 4: Joseph's Faith

Joseph's story of faith and obedience does not end in Egypt. Again, God appeared to Joseph in a dream (Matthew 2:19-23) revealing to him the proper time to take Mary and Jesus back to Israel.

¹⁹ After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt ²⁰ and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child's life are dead."

²¹ So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. ²² But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, ²³ and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene.

Joseph immediately returned. But on the way, he learned the new king Archelaus was a violent man. This news certainly must have troubled him. Once more, God spoke to Joseph in a dream, guiding him to Galilee where the family could settle in Nazareth. This fulfilled a prophecy concerning the Messiah, and Joseph again obeyed.

Once again faithfulness to God and his message comes first to Joseph. His trust in God's vision for his life not only kept Jesus safe but also ended up fulfilling Prophecy.

Day 5: A Father's life lessons

We do not know how long Joseph lived as Jesus' earthly father. He is last mentioned in scripture when Jesus was twelve years old. But Joseph trained his son in the trade of carpentry and made sure he had spiritual training in Nazareth. He also took the whole family on the yearly trip to Jerusalem for the Passover, which Jesus continued to observe during his adult years.

While we only get a few glimpses of him, scripture reveals to us that Joseph was faithful to God. Could it be that this is the key to successful parenting? To model a life of consistent faithfulness and obedience to God? Obedience to the guidance we receive from God leads to more guidance from Him. Social position or previous experience is of little importance when God chooses to use you. Parenting with integrity and walking in humbleness with our God are the most important "qualifications" we can have throughout all of the parenting stages.

This Christmas may the life of Joseph inspire and encourage you. God still longs to reveal Himself. He still desires to give parents guidance. He still wants us to grow in dependence and trust in Him. There is nothing to fear when we walk with Him.

Thoughts?