

## **Matthew 1:18-25 — What Does Joseph Teach Us About Courage At Christmas?**

**November 28, 2021**

Good morning, CrossWinds! I hope you were able to enjoy a great Thanksgiving. It is hard to believe the Christmas season is upon us. At CrossWinds, we typically have a Christmas series in the month of December that leads up to our Christmas Eve celebration. That is why we are beginning our Christmas series this morning. It is called One-on-One with Christmas. In this series, we are going one-on-one with the different characters in the Christmas story. We will see what each of them teaches us about Jesus and why he came. Pastor Kris will take a week to go one-on-one with the Shepherds. Pastor Stephen, from our Spencer Campus, will take a week to go one-on-one with the wise men. Pastor Jordan, who is also from our Spencer Campus, will take a week to go one-on-one with Mary. This morning, I am taking a week to go one-on-one with Joseph, Jesus' stepfather.

This week, as I was thinking about Joseph. I realized I have never heard a sermon about Joseph. He is the quiet character in the Christmas story. Have any of you heard a sermon on Joseph? I didn't think so.

As I studied, I quickly realized why nobody preaches about Joseph in the Christmas story. That is because the Bible doesn't have much to say about Joseph. Rather than avoiding Joseph, we are going to dive in and see what we can learn about him.

Let's begin with some background.

## What is the background on Joseph's life?

### Joseph was a carpenter.

While the Bible doesn't tell us much about Joseph, we know his profession. He was a carpenter. We learn that in Matthew 13:55. He was a blue-collar worker. All you guys who work with your hands for a living can relate to Joseph. The Greek word translated as a carpenter in our English Bibles is the word *tekton*. It means "a worker in hard substances." It was not just used to describe a carpenter. It was also used to describe a stonemason. This means Joseph may have built furniture. He may have built houses. He may also have laid the stone foundation for houses. He worked with different kinds of hard substances. It is possible he worked with more than wood.

It is also interesting to know that about an hour's walk from Nazareth was the Roman city of Sepphoris. The Romans were rebuilding it in stone at the time Joseph, Mary, and Jesus lived in Nazareth. The Romans employed many stonemasons since they were rebuilding the major buildings of the city in stone. It is possible that Joseph worked in Sepphoris as one of the stonemasons employed by the Romans. If that is true, it made him even more like a construction worker because he had an hour commute to and from work each day. Joseph was a regular blue-collar guy.

### The last time we hear from Joseph was when Jesus was 12 years old.

After Jesus' birth, and the early years of Jesus' life, we don't hear from Joseph until Jesus is 12. In Luke 2:40 we see that Joseph regularly took his family to Jerusalem each year for the Passover. Today, we would say Joseph

was a regular hard-working guy but he was also a faithful guy who made sure his family was at church. After that, Joseph disappeared from the scene. Nobody knows what happened to him. We never hear from him again.

**Joseph most likely died before Jesus died.**

Why do I think Joseph died? When Jesus was dying on the cross, in John 19:26, Jesus entrusted the care of his mother, Mary, to the apostle John. If Joseph was still alive, Joseph would have been the one taking care of Mary, his wife. If Joseph died, Jesus, as the oldest son, would have been in charge of caring for his mother. This is why Jesus entrusted the care of his mother to the apostle John when he died.

After that, we don't have many details on Joseph. The Bible tells us he was an ordinary blue-collar worker who was a godly man. While most people overlooked Joseph in daily life, God did not overlook Joseph. Just as God chose Mary to be the mother of Jesus, God chose Joseph to be the stepfather of Jesus. If God chose Joseph to be the stepfather of his own son, you know that while Joseph was an ordinary guy, as far as God was concerned, he was an extraordinary guy.

That is why we are taking the time to look at his life this morning. While the Bible doesn't tell us much about him, what little insight the Bible does give will be incredibly important in helping us understand what was notable in the eyes of God about Joseph.

The Bible contains two accounts of Jesus' birth. The beginning of the Gospel of Luke tells us the account of Jesus' birth from Mary's side. This is why

Jesus' genealogy in the Gospel of Luke ends with Mary. The beginning of the Gospel of Matthew tells us the account of Jesus' birth from Joseph's side. This is why the genealogy at the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew ends with Joseph. This morning, we will look at Jesus' birth from Matthew 1:18-25, with a special focus on Joseph so we see what we can learn about him and his character. Let's read those verses to familiarize ourselves with the story.

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. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 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. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. Matthew 1:18–25 (ESV)

As we study these verses, we will put a special focus on Joseph. We will see that for Joseph to let Jesus into his life on that first Christmas took real courage. Nothing has changed. Just as it took great courage for Joseph to let Jesus into his life on the first Christmas, it will take courage for us to let Jesus in our lives this Christmas. Let's work our way through the passage and you will see what I mean. As we begin, Matthew gave us a little background.

### **Mary had an unexpected change in her plans.**

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. Matthew 1:18 (ESV)

While Matthew 1:18 only devotes one verse to the story of how Mary became pregnant with Jesus, the Gospel of Luke tells us the rest of the

backstory on how Mary became pregnant. Gabriel, an angel of the Lord, visited Nazareth where Mary lived. He greeted Mary and told her she was greatly favored by God. She would conceive and have a son. Let's read from Luke to learn more about how those amazing moments unfolded.

And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God." Luke 1:30–35 (ESV)

What is easy to forget is the age of Mary when she had this conversation with Gabriel. Does anyone want to take a guess at her age?

Mary would have been around 12-14 years of age. That is a girl in junior high. Imagine being a 14-year-old junior high girl that came home and told her parents she was pregnant. If that didn't rock a young woman's world, I don't know what would. Now imagine that at the time you were engaged to a man that would soon be your husband. You come home pregnant and need to tell him he is not the father. How do you think that would go over? While this was amazing news, and Mary was privileged by God to be the mother of Jesus, it was still news that completely wrecked Mary's world. It turned her life upside down. It upset all of Mary's plans for her life. Her status in society was about to change. She expected her impending wedding to Joseph would crash and burn. All of her friends would laugh at her. People would shun her. Who would believe her when she told them she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit? Nobody!

This is what is amazing about Mary. Look how she responded to God suddenly and unexpectedly changing her plans, turning her life upside down, and putting her in a very tough position with her parents and Joseph, the man she loved.

And Mary said, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. Luke 1:38 (ESV)

I love this about Mary. While she was privileged by God, socially her life was ruined. She would have been shamed and have had her reputation destroyed. She didn't argue with God. She just accepted God's change in her plans. The reason she could do that was she didn't see herself as anything special. She was just a servant of the Lord. If God wanted to change her plans for her life, that was OK. Mary didn't see herself as living to achieve her plans for her life. She just wanted to be used by God in any way God saw fit, even if that was a hard plan. Mary's life was about serving God, not about serving herself.

My friends, this shows incredible spiritual maturity, especially for a 14-year-old girl.

Even though this is just the introduction, we already have a lesson to learn. How do we react when God changes our plans? Do we accept those changes? Do we remember God is in charge of our lives and if he suddenly and unexpectedly changes our plans, he does that for a reason? Are we available to be used by God in any way he sees fit, even if it is hard?

When God changes our plans, do we spend all of our time whining and complaining? Are our lives more about serving ourselves and meeting our desires or are our lives available to be used by God in any way he sees fit?

This Christmas season, things may fall apart in our well-ordered holiday world. It may be something minor, such as your dinner guests arrive late and the food is cold. It may be something major. You may lose your job or be diagnosed with cancer. When tragedy strikes and there is a sudden change in our plans, how will we react? Will we be angry at God, or will we turn to God in prayer and tell God that if he wants to change our plans, that is OK. We are just here to serve him in any way he sees fit.

Before we leave this verse, there is another piece of interesting information I want to point out. This is for those who are interested in the more technical matters of Scripture. The Greek word translated as *birth* in Matthew 1:18 is the same Greek word translated as *genealogy* in Matthew 1:1. It is the Greek word *genesis*. The word means “origins” or “beginnings.” So Matthew 1:1-17 gives us the earthly origin of Jesus. It is Jesus’ genealogy of the human side with his lineage following the line of David down to Joseph. Beginning in verse 18, we see Jesus’ origin from the divine side. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Matthew was intentionally showing us in the introduction to his Gospel that Jesus is fully man in verses 1-17, then he shows us Jesus is fully God in verse 18. It is interesting how he introduced us to Jesus being fully man and fully God right at the beginning of his Gospel.

Let’s get back to the story.

Mary and Joseph were both young. They were engaged. Joseph would have been older than Mary. He was most likely in his late teens or early twenties. As a man, he needed to establish himself in a business so he could provide for a

family before he could marry a wife. Young women were typically married off at a young age, as we said earlier, between the ages of 12 and 14.

In the Jewish culture, there were two stages of marriage that are roughly equivalent to the way marriage works in our culture. They also had an engagement period and a wedding ceremony. The first stage in a Jewish marriage was called the *Kiddushin*. This is our engagement period. Interestingly, a man did not propose to a woman. The two families got together and drew up a legal contract for the marriage of their children. Once that paperwork was done, the couple was legally married, even though they had not consummated the marriage. This engagement stage lasted 6-12 months, usually closer to 12 months. One way engagement in their culture was different from engagement in our culture is the engaged couple did not spend much time together.

During this time, the families were saving and preparing for the wedding. The husband would need to pay a dowry to purchase his bride. If he had a very desirable wife, the dowry would be expensive. If his wife wasn't that desirable, perhaps all he needed to give was a dead chicken.

That dowry served multiple purposes. First, it helped pay for the wedding. Weddings were week-long parties, which meant you fed the entire neighborhood for a week. We all know how expensive a wedding is today. Imagine the cost of a wedding that fed the neighborhood for a week! We know Jesus' first miracle was at Cana, where he changed the water into wine. That was because they hadn't purchased enough wine because weddings were expensive! This is why you needed to save for the wedding.



In addition, much of that dowry money was saved by the bride's parents. It served as a type of marriage insurance. If the bride's husband died or he divorced her, that money was used to help provide for her. If the husband stayed married to his wife, he would eventually get the dowry money he paid back via inheritance when his in-laws passed away.

One way this is different from our culture is that during the *Kiddushin* period, the couple was considered legally married even though the couple had not consummated the marriage and was not spending time together. The only way to break off the engagement was by divorce.

The second stage in a Jewish wedding is called the *Huppa*. That was the week-long wedding celebration where you fed the neighborhood. This was the time when they "hupped-it-up."

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes. Joseph only knew that Mary went away to see her relative Elizabeth during their engagement period. When she came back, she was pregnant. In Joseph's mind, there was only one reason a woman was pregnant if you weren't the father. Joseph was a heartbroken man. No matter what Mary told him about being pregnant through the Holy Spirit, he wouldn't have believed her. Neither would you.

Imagine what it would have been like for you if while you were engaged to your spouse, she came home pregnant. How would you have felt?

Joseph's dreams of an amazing marriage and a great wedding were shattered. He thought he knew Mary. He thought she was a godly woman. Now it

looked like she was exactly the opposite kind of woman. What would he do? That brings us to our next verse.

**And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. Matthew 1:19 (ESV)**

Here we learn a bit about Joseph's character. Joseph was described as a just man. That means he took his Bible seriously. He followed God's Word. He was very concerned about pleasing God and doing the right thing. Joseph knew what God's Word said about a woman who was unfaithful to her husband while they were engaged, and it wasn't pretty.

**If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones... Deuteronomy 22:23–24 (ESV)**

God's Word commanded that Mary be stoned to death because of her apparent infidelity. At this time, the Romans did not allow the Jews to stone people to death. However, Mary wasn't guaranteed to escape punishment because of Rome. There is plenty of historical evidence that the Jews sometimes carried out stoning as an act of mob violence against people since an official judicial process could not lead to stoning.

There were two other options the Romans allowed that was practiced by the Jews in situations like this. One is that Joseph could have brought Mary before the Jewish courts of his day. There Joseph would publicly declare that he was not the father of the child in her womb. This would publicly absolve him of all guilt or suspicion. The downside is that it would have led to a very open and public shaming of Mary. It would have ruined Mary's reputation for life. It would have ruined her future. It would have shamed her family. It would have almost

guaranteed that Mary would never get married. Mary's name would have been associated with public scandal, just like the name of Kyle Rittenhouse is today. This was an attractive option because it made Joseph look good, but it made Joseph look good while making Mary look bad. It would have saved Joseph's reputation while ruining Mary's.

The other option was Joseph could divorce her quietly. The two families could have met together with witnesses and drawn up divorce papers. It wouldn't have publicly cleared Joseph's name but it maintained a shred of decency for Mary's name and her family. Even though Joseph was a deeply hurt man, this was the option Joseph planned to pursue. Mary was not to be stoned. She would not be publicly shamed. He would divorce her quietly. The story continues in the next verse.

**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." Matthew 1:20 (ESV)**

It says "As he considered these things." I picture Joseph laying in bed with a million thoughts racing through his mind. What would he do? How could this happen? Why was this happening to him? This was not the way life was supposed to unfold. In our mind's eye, we can see him laying in his bed with tears in his eyes until, in exhaustion, he finally fell asleep.

That is when, just like God broke into Mary's life, God broke into Joseph's life. An angel appeared to him in a dream and told him not to be afraid. He was to take Mary as his wife. Mary wasn't lying to him. Mary wasn't unfaithful to him. The child in her womb was not there because of another man but by the Holy Spirit of God. She was telling the truth, even though it seemed unbelievable.

Before this, we saw Joseph as a righteous man. Here we learn that at this point he was also a cowardly man. Joseph was afraid to take Mary as his wife.

This is where Joseph teaches us the first lesson about finding courage at Christmas.

**1. If we are going to have Jesus in our life, we must have the courage to be mocked by this world.**

Up to this point, Joseph's life was moving along nicely. He was a poor man, but he was known as a hard-working, righteous man. He had a reputation for being a kind and just man. All of that was about to change. If Joseph wed Mary, in the eyes of the small town Nazarene gossips, it would have looked like Joseph was admitting to being the father of the child. No self-respecting man would have wed an unfaithful woman who was carrying another man's child. You would only wed a woman if she was carrying your child.

Joseph was afraid to wed Mary because that meant Mary's shame would become his shame. Everyone who laughed at Mary and who separated themselves from her would laugh at him and separate themselves from him.

When Mary became pregnant with Jesus, her reputation was destroyed. She didn't have much of a choice. But Joseph had a choice. He needed the courage to make the hard choice to take Mary as his wife, to obey God's word, and let his reputation be ruined as a result. From that point forward, Joseph would not be known as a good, righteous, and just man. In the small town of Nazareth, people would assume he was immoral before their wedding night.

Joseph knew Mary's pregnancy ruined her life. She would be cut off from her friends. To some degree, she would even be cut off from her own family. God

came into her life and turned everything upside down. Nobody would believe that she was a pregnant virgin.

For Joseph to take Mary into his life, he needed to have the courage for her disgrace to now become his disgrace, for her shame to become his shame.

To show you how long people remembered that Jesus was conceived before Mary and Joseph's wedding night, look at what the religious leaders said about Jesus 30 years later.

"You are doing the works your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God." John 8:41 (ESV)

Here was Jesus 30 years after his birth and they were riding him about being born of what they thought was a sexually immoral union. If Jesus was still fighting that reputation battle 30 years after he was born, imagine how bad it was for Mary and Joseph for the 30 years before.

So Joseph was afraid to take Mary as his wife because it would ruin his reputation. Just as God changed Mary's plans, Joseph needed to have the courage to let God change his plans. For the rest of his life, just like Mary, Joseph would be considered guilty of sexual immorality he didn't commit.

Nothing has changed. Today, are you afraid to have Christ in your life? Anyone who has Christ in his or her life must be willing to let Jesus change his or her well-laid plans as God did for Mary and Joseph. Anyone who asks Jesus into his or her life must be willing to have the world laugh at him or her and reject him or her because he or she chose to have Jesus in his or her life.

So many of us talk about Jesus at Christmas, but in reality, we care more about preserving our reputation than we do about paying a social price to have

Jesus in our lives. We care more about fulfilling our plans for our lives than in letting God mess up our plans so we do something harder and better with our lives.

So Joseph teaches us the first lesson about the courage of Christmas. If you are going to have Jesus in your life, you need the courage to give up your reputation in this world to follow God's will for your life.

Before we get too discouraged about this, I want to remind you that having the courage to lose your reputation for Jesus is not a losing proposition. It is always a winning proposition. Each Christmas there are billions of people who remember the role Mary and Joseph were privileged to play when it came to God bringing his son into the world. Today, do we know any of the names of the small-town gossips from Nazareth that ran Mary and Joseph's reputation into the ground? Absolutely not.

When we have the courage to ask Jesus into our lives and are willing to let Jesus ruin our popularity and our plans, I guarantee you God will do something with our lives that is memorable and lasting for Christ and his kingdom. That makes any sacrifices we make to have Jesus in our lives worth it.

Let's continue the story.

**"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21 (ESV)**

The Bible is very clear that while Joseph was Mary's husband, Joseph was not Jesus' biological father. He was only Jesus' stepfather. This brings us to our second lesson about courage at Christmas.

## **2. If we are going to have Jesus in our lives, we need to have the courage to let him be in charge.**

What is striking about this verse is while Joseph was the legal father of Jesus, he was not given the right to name Jesus. Joseph was told what name to give Jesus. That is because Joseph was not in charge of Jesus. Jesus was in charge of Joseph.

When we create something, we are given the right to name something. When parents have children, they are given the right to name their son or daughter. When Elon Musk created Tesla, he had the right to name Tesla. When we create things, we get the right to name things. They are under our management.

The angel told Joseph that to have Jesus in his life, he wouldn't get the right to name Jesus because Jesus would not be under Joseph's management. It was just the opposite, Joseph was under Jesus' management. Joseph was not going to be in control of Jesus. Jesus was in control of Joseph.

Today, many people do not want to become Christians because they don't want Jesus to be in control of their lives. They want to be in charge of their own lives, habits, and what they do for fun. Jesus is their consultant, not in charge of them. They will talk about Jesus at Christmas, but in truth they are cowards. They do not have the courage to ask Jesus to be in charge of their lives and their futures even though he is the God who rules the world. They are afraid of Jesus. They don't trust Jesus. Is that you?

This Christmas season, are you here holding Jesus at arm's length because you do not want anyone to be in control of your life beside yourself?

There is no way you can be a Christian, unless you are willing to let Christ be in charge of your life.

If you don't like the idea of anyone being in charge of your life, I understand. In our current political climate, it is hard to trust anyone. It feels like everyone is trying to use you to get what they want out of you. It is different when it comes to Jesus. He is the one person each of us can trust when it comes to letting him be in control of our lives and our futures.

The rest of this verse tells us why Jesus came. It says Jesus came to save his people from their sin. Folks, Jesus didn't come to oppress us. He came to save us. He didn't come to use us. He came to die for us because he loves us. Jesus didn't come to keep us from God. Jesus came to die in our places for our sin to bring us back to God.

If someone loves you so much that they are willing to die for you in order to save you if they are willing to suffer for you, why do you think we can't trust them with being in charge of our lives? Jesus created the universe. If anybody knows how to run my life better than me, it would be Jesus. If Jesus loves me, died for me, and knows me better than I know myself, it would be foolish to not put him in charge of me.

If today, you are talking about Jesus at Christmas time, but you don't have the courage to let Jesus be in charge of your life, I challenge you to make that change today. Right here, right now, before you leave this morning, have the courage to get out of the driver's seat of your life. Get in the passenger seat and



ask Jesus to be in charge of your life and your future. That is what it means to be a Christian.

This brings us to the third lesson that Joseph teaches about courage at Christmas.

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus. Matthew 1:24–25 (ESV)

### **3. If we are going to have Jesus in our lives, we need the courage to obey God's Word.**

One thing I love about Joseph is the way he obeyed God's words. When God told him to do something, he was quick to obey. It didn't matter if his parents didn't agree with him or his friends didn't agree with him. He courageously followed God's words, no matter what it cost him. When God told him to wed Mary, he immediately married her. He didn't hesitate for weeks or months. He woke up from the dream and immediately married her, no questions asked. That is courageous.

How do we handle when God speaks to us? When we read something in God's Word that directly applies to our lives and we know what God wants us to do, we tend to delay or avoid obedience. At least I know that is how I respond. Delayed or avoiding obedience to God's Word shows a lack of courage, at least on my part.

Joseph was notably different in this area. He was incredibly courageous when it came to obeying what God told him to do, no matter the cost.

We don't just see immediate obedience when he wed Mary but we see it again in his life about a year later.

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him." And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son." Matthew 2:13–15 (ESV)

This took place after the visit of the wise men to baby Jesus. Incidentally, many people don't realize that Mary and Joseph settled in Bethlehem after Jesus was born in Bethlehem. They didn't immediately return to Nazareth after the census. The wise men also did not come on the night Jesus was born. Let me show you.

And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. Matthew 2:11 (ESV)

At this point, Mary and Joseph were not in a stable. They lived in a house. They settled in Bethlehem. In addition, the word for child is the word used for a toddler. Jesus was walking at this point. He was between 1 and 2 years of age when the wise men visited. In Bethlehem, Joseph set up a business. He finally had a stable income. He had a house and a mortgage. In Bethlehem, at least Mary and Joseph were not hounded by the town gossips of Nazareth. Yet, when the angel appeared to Joseph in a dream and warned him about Herod's plans to kill baby Jesus, how long did Joseph wait until he obeyed? He got up that very night. They packed what they could on animals and left everything else in the house. They even left the house behind. Joseph left many of his carpentry tools behind. They left their furniture behind. They left their life behind because Joseph was a man who courageously obeyed God's words.

To have Jesus in our lives, we also need courage to obey God's words when they are tough. Leaving our work and our lives behind in the middle of the night to move to another country would take courageous obedience. Would you be willing to do that if God told you at 2 a.m. tonight to leave town and move to another city?

If we look a little further into Matthew, we see Joseph again courageously obeying God's words, even when it was hard.

But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." And he rose and took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the district of Galilee. And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene. Matthew 2:19–23 (ESV)

At this point, Joseph was again financially stable. He had an established business in Egypt. God changed his plans again and moved Joseph, Mary, and Jesus back to the land of Israel. God ultimately directed Joseph back to Nazareth, which is probably the last place he wanted to go. It was Mary's hometown. It was a town that knew their history and constantly made them live in the shadow of their past. It was a town that did not accept Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. The people there despised Jesus. Let me show you.

When Jesus began his ministry, he eventually came to Nazareth, his hometown. In spite of his miracles in other places, they wouldn't accept Jesus. They said, "Jesus is just the carpenter's son." They couldn't see him as anything more than Mary and Joseph's boy that was conceived before wedlock. In fact,

they took Jesus to the edge of a cliff where the city was built and tried to throw Jesus off the cliff to kill him. How is that for a warm welcome in your hometown?

This tells me Nazareth was a hard town for Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. They went there because they were courageously obedient to God who directed them to that city.

## **Conclusion**

### **Asking Jesus into my life will take courage.**

So, when we look at Joseph in the Christmas story, he is a reminder for all of us that just as it took courage for Joseph to have Jesus in his life, it will take courage for us to have Jesus in our lives.

- Asking Jesus into our lives takes courage because the world will mock us.
- Asking Jesus into our lives takes courage because it means we need to give up control and let Jesus be in charge.
- Asking Jesus into our lives takes courage because it means obeying God's Word.

Here are two final thoughts on Joseph, Mary and Jesus.

### **Where did Joseph find the courage to take Mary and Jesus into his life?**

I think that when Joseph realized Mary courageously sacrificed her life to be willing to give birth to Jesus, the one who would save him from his sin, that helped him find the courage to give up his life to care for her. In a similar way, the more we learn about how courageously Jesus gave up his life to save us, the more courage we will find to give up our lives to serve our savior.

## What do Mary and Joseph teach us about what it means to become a Christian?

We are like Mary. We are helpless, rejected, and full of shame. We need someone to save us. Jesus is like Joseph. Just as Joseph chose to give up his life to be Mary's earthly savior, Jesus chose to give up his life to be our heavenly savior. Jesus died for our sin to bring us back to God.



Dr. Kurt Trucksess is ordained in the Evangelical Free Church of America. He enjoys reading, writing, and time with his family. Feel free to contact him at [www.Christ2RCulture.com](http://www.Christ2RCulture.com) ([www.c2rc.com](http://www.c2rc.com))

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