

Christmas Courage: Joseph

Matthew 1 & 2; Luke 1 & 2

It takes courage to follow the Lord. It is easy to say I believe in God. It is easy to say I am a Christian. Yet, it is hard to be a disciple.

Jesus says, "Follow Me." Often we interpret that to mean, "Follow Jesus when it is convenient or easy. Otherwise do what we want."

1. Let me illustrate my point. We are told, "1Th. 4:3 For **this is the will** of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication."

Yet how many Christians remain sexually pure?

2. 1Th. 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for **this is the will** of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Yet how many Christians give thanks, even in the midst of hardship?

3. We are told, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. ⁷ Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." – 2 Cor. 9:6-7.

Yet how many give bountifully, cheerfully, and sacrificially to the Lord's work?

4. We are told to present our bodies a living sacrifice unto God . . . which is our reasonable service . . .

Yet, how many really present their bodies a living sacrifice?

5. We are told to serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. Yet how many Christians serve with the right spirit?

6. We are told "Not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." – Hebrew 10:25.

And yet, how many Christians have more excuses for forsaking faithful attendance in their local assembly.

7. We are to be witnesses in our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most parts of the world. Yet better than 60% of the born again Christians have never led anyone to Christ. And the average witnessing Christian only witnesses a handful of times a year.
8. We are told to abide daily in the Word of God and in prayer; yet how many busy themselves in other matters.

Christians seem to select what they want to do rather than living courageously for Christ.

Today we are going to look at a courageous believer.

1. In the face of scorn, ridicule and slander he still chose to continue to serve.
2. In the face of life's difficulties and the possibility of immanent death he continued to serve.
3. And in the face of the mundane routine of life he still continued to be faithful in all things.
4. God uses human instrumentality in bringing forth His kingdom. He never would have used Joseph and Mary, if this were not true. He uses us in unfolding His plan for the ages, as well as in His plan of redemption.
5. God never instructed His children to sit idly by and watch. He has a place of service for all the redeemed.

We will see this unfold in the life of Joseph.

1. We will see Joseph in the face of fear, heartache, disappointment, shame, brutal misunderstanding, cruelty, and hardship and uncertainly to continue to be faithful.
2. We will see God grant Joseph divine illumination and special revelation in order to care out his task.
3. Joseph is struck with awe, wonder and pondering as God uses his offerings of faithfulness.
4. Even in the very midst of everyday life Joseph continues to be faithful in all things.

- a. Faithful in prayer
- b. Faithful in his worship
- c. Faithful in his yieldedness
- d. Faithful in his service

1. Joseph's family line.

- a. Within the Jewish community he was somebody of importance. He came from a rich spiritual heritage.
- b. He was of the tribe of Judah – Matthew 1:2
- c. He was of the root of Jesse – Matthew 1:6a
- d. He was of the seed of David – Matthew 1:6b
- e. He was of the royal line through:
 - i. Solomon – Matthew 1:7 to
 - ii. Zorobabel – Matthew 1:13
- f. He was of the kingly line. All of his forefathers ruled on the throne of David. He was in line for the throne.
- g. His lineage was not something to speak loudly about. He lived in the day of Herod the Great who was very jealous for his throne. If Joseph had caused a small stir by declaring his right for the throne, Herod would have had him killed..
- h. Yet with his family lineage he was not prideful, but he was willing to follow God even if it would bring reproach to his family name.
- i. He suffered scorn, ridicule and slander for the honor of serving God. He never lived long enough to see his family name vindicated. Yet, he was courageous enough to serve God.

2. His Marriage:

- a. Matthew 1:18
- b. The typical Hebrew wedding began with an espousal period of one year. They would be joined together in an espousal ceremony

and considered husband and wife. Yet the male would go home and build a house for his bride. During that time they would remain pure. At the end of that period he would go to his espoused wife's home and claim his awaiting bride. A wedding ceremony would proceed and the marriage would be consummated.

- c. Yet, during this waiting period God had other plans.
 - d. **Luke 1:5** – During the course of Abia which is one of the 24 priestly rotations at the temple. The angel Gabriel visited a priest by the name of Zachariah. He was told that his aged wife, Elisabeth should bear them a son. He was to be the forerunner to Christ. He was to be called John.
 - e. This event took place around **September/October**. Zachariah indeed went home and his wife conceived.
 - f. **Luke 1:24** – tells us that she hid herself for five months. October to **March**.
 - g. **Around March or April we are told that the angel Gabriel made another visit.** This time to a young virgin named Mary. Joseph's espoused wife. – **Luke 1:28-35**
 - h. Notice **Luke 1:36** – Elisabeth is six months pregnant and is part of the sign Mary is given.
 - i. In **Luke 1:39-40** – some time in April Mary visits Elisabeth and remains with her until July, which is about the time of John's birth or she leaves just before it.
 - j. **This is where Joseph's courage and integrity shines.**
 - k. **Mary returns to Nazareth in July or August 3 or 4 months pregnant - Matthew 1:18-25.**
3. Here we learn of Joseph's courage.
- a. **Matthew 1:19** – He is a just man (not a proud man).
 - b. He is **not impulsive**.

- c. He is **thoughtful** – Matthew 1:19-20a (the idea is that he ponders the matter. He has two choices – have her stoned in religious righteousness or divorce her away privately.)
- d. **Matthew 1:20** – the angel appears.
 - i. The title used of Joseph is his royal title, Son of David
 - ii. He reminded of His royal lineage
 - iii. Do not fear to take Mary as your wife.
 - iv. Supernatural origins – conceived of the Holy Spirit
 - v. His name is Jesus – Matthew 1:21/Luke 1:31.

Both he and Mary were told the name. Jesus – (Savior). Did they compare notes before Joseph had the angel visit him? Or, did the name come up later in their conversation after the angel appeared as confirmation of this event?
- e. Joseph is told that Jesus shall save his people from their sins. – Matthew 1:21
- f. Mary is told Jesus shall rule on the throne of David. – Luke 1:32-33

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: ³³ And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”
- g. Though Mary was of the lineage of King David through his son Nathan. She was not of the Royal line of David. The royal right could only come from Joseph by through adoption.
- h. The virgin birth is expressed in both Matthew and Luke. – Matthew 1:22-23; Luke 1:28-30, 34, 35
- i. Notice this fact of the virgin birth in the terms begat
 - i. **Matthew 1:2** “Abraham **begat** Isaac; and Isaac **begat** Jacob; and Jacob **begat** Judas and his brethren”

But in Matthew 1:16 “And Jacob **begat** Joseph **the husband of Mary**, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

Joseph is never said to have bore/fathered Jesus.

- ii. **Matthew 2:13** “And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt”

Not “your” young child, but “**the** young child and his mother . . .

- iii. **Luke 2:43** “And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it.”

Again, Joseph is not called “the father” but “Joseph” and his mother.

- iv. **Luke 3:23** “And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph.”

Joseph courageously takes Mary as his wife. In doing so he:

1. He chose to share the blame with Mary.
2. He knew they would be misunderstood.
3. He chose not to regard his family name and honor, but rather to honor God. He never lived long enough to see his name vindicated.
4. He chose to protect Mary and the Child.
5. He chose to be obedient in the face of certain difficulty and hardship – **Matthew 1:24.**
6. In God’s sight they kept themselves pure – **Matthew 1:25.**
7. Afterward, he and Mary had other children – **Matthew 13:55** – James, Joses, Simon and Judas.

Finally, in late November or December they were commanded to go to their home city to be taxed. It was the first worldwide tax ordered by Rome. It occurred in the days when Cyrenius was governor in Syria. Apparently

Cyrenius governed twice: once from 4 B.C. to 1 B.C. and the second time from 6 A.D. to 10 A.D.

They lived in Nazareth. It was most likely a small town. Little is known about its history.

There was a common statement quoted in those days that went like this. “If any one wishes to be rich, let him go north; if he wants to be wise, let him come south.”

1. Many Jews moved north of Jerusalem because of the economy. Food was more abundant in the Galilean area. It was cheaper to live.
2. Food in Jerusalem could cost as high as five times as it did in the north. That is probably why we find Joseph, of the house of David making his living in the north.
3. This of course had a down side. The Galilean area was far more secular. Roman garrisons, and Roman theaters dotted the northern landscape, whereas the more religious Jews were in the south.
4. Because of the taxing many had to go south with Joseph and Mary to register. Hence no room in the inn.
 - a. Luke 2:16 – Jesus was born in a stable and was laid in a manger – a feeding trough or an animal stall. And visited by shepherds.
 - b. I suspect they were afraid and disappointed when they travelled to Bethlehem. Then to find no room in the inn. Certainly, they must have wondered why God had allowed this. Could not God do better than a stable?

Yet they remained faithful. How do I know?
 - c. Joseph as the head of the home kept his family faithful. Eight days after Jesus’ birth they circumcised Him – Luke 2:2:21
 - d. Matthew 2:11 – It says they moved into a house in Bethlehem, then 33 days later, or 41 days after the birth of Jesus – sometime in February – Mary went through a cleansing ceremony in the temple. – Luke 2:22
 - e. Mary offered two pigeons or two turtledoves, which indicated they were poor. This ceremony must have occurred before the

Magi's visit, since they provided them with gold, myrrh and frankincense.

Yet even in their poverty they were obedient.

- f. Simeon and Anna brought more awe and wonder to Joseph and Mary – Luke 2:33
- g. Then more awe as the Magi appeared at their house in Bethlehem.

5. Joseph's second dream/revelation – Matthew 2:13

- a. The angel did not appear to Mary, but to Joseph. Mary had one angelic visit. Joseph has four angelic visits. Why? Because he is the head of the home. He is assigned to protect.

He was obedient and took Mary and the Child to Egypt – Matthew 2:14-15

- b. They lived in Egypt until Herod the Great died (which occurred in either 4 B.C. or 1 B.C.). At that time, Rome divided Herod's territory into 4 parts. Archelaus reign in Judea, and Antipas reigned in Galilee.
- c. Joseph's 3rd dream occurs in Matthew 2:19-21 to leave Egypt
- d. Joseph's 4th dream occurs in Matthew 2:22-23 instructing him to go to Galilee.

6. Joseph was courageous in the face of scorn, ridicule and slander.

Joseph was courageous in the face of life's difficulties and remained faithful.

Joseph was courageous in the face of the routine and mundane. And remained faithful.

- a. Even after everything returns to what we might call normal, he did not backslide but remained faithful.
- b. He remained faithful in worship. Luke 2:41 – He went to the Passover – an annual 140 mile round trip on foot with his family. This trip most likely took two weeks out of his schedule and cost money. Yet he was obedient to God. Most people have a hard

time driving to church. Imagine what would happen if we had to walk to church.

- c. He remained faithful in little things as well as the big things. In Luke 2:42 & 50 he did not understand the big picture. But he remained faithful.
- d. Joseph was a man of God. A courageous leader.

It takes courage to follow the Lord. It is easy to say I believe in God. It is easy to say I am a Christian. Yet, it is hard to be a disciple.

Jesus says, "Follow Me."

So how are we interpreting that in our lives?

Do we interpret it to mean, "By God's grace, I will be faithful in all things?"

Or does it mean, "I will follow Jesus only when it is convenient and easy for me, otherwise I will do what I want to do."