

JOSEPH: THE QUIET MAN

MATTHEW 1-2; LUKE 1-2

As we open to Matthew 1, whenever I look at the cast of Christmas: one member stands out because he is so quiet.

Joseph is one of the main characters: he opens the Christmas story in Matthew 1 and closes the story in Luke 2. In case you didn't think what that means, he's in every scene in all 4 of the chapters devoted to Christ's birth. Joseph can be called:

The Quiet Man

But even though he is central to all the events, one of the key players, the first amazing fact is that **Joseph has no recorded words**. Joseph thinks, prays, and obeys: but never is recorded as saying anything.

I like to say that if I was ever asked to be in a Christmas play, Joseph is the part in the play I would choose because: he never said a word, he just stands there smiling and doing what he is told to do!

The second and even more amazing truth about Joseph is that the **ONLY** thing we are absolutely sure Joseph ever said was: **Joseph was the first to declare the Name of JESUS**. Just as the Scriptures say, it was on the 8th day after Christ's birth, when He was circumcised, that Joseph stepped forward and spoke the Name that is above every name and said His Name will be called: Jesus!

This season of remembering Christ's Birth, pause with me in God's Word and extract some powerful truths by observing what the Scriptures reveal and imply about this amazing young man Joseph, who walked with the Lord.

It was nearly 2,000 years ago that God spoke to a young, teenaged couple. They had been engaged for marriage since their childhood, by their parents. Mary¹ was by all available data from this historic period somewhere between 14 and 17 years of age, and Joseph was most likely between the ages of 18 and 20.

Their lives up to this historic moment had been exemplary, in fact they were chosen by God because He knew He could count on them. Think about how many right choices

¹ Keener, C. S., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament* . InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Ill., electronic edition.

Joseph had made at such a young age. He was not perfect, but he had chosen to respond properly to the authority around him—from his heart.

In Matthew 1:19 Joseph was described by God as “just”. He was a young man of conviction. He had chosen the path of practicing self-denial. God knew he was pure, had chosen pure habits, and fled sexual sins.

Those choices made him just the man God could use at this historic moment. And Mary was the same. She was a woman of the Word. She lived her faith, and considered herself a bond slave for the Lord. From God’s Word we find that:

Joseph’s Life is A powerful Example

Joseph is such a powerful lesson to all who will look closely. Joseph was willing to obey even if he didn’t understand what God was doing with his life.

Matthew outlines Joseph’s life as a collection of the type of choices that please God in the life of a teenager, or anyone for that matter who really wants to let God in to reign in their life.

We are only going to examine the first 3 or 4, but why don’t you write these all down as notes and ask the Lord to help you make these choices also for Him in your life.

1. Joseph **sought the Lord with his problems** (Matthew 1:18)
2. Joseph **allowed the Lord to make him compassionate** (Matthew 1:19)
3. Joseph **listened to the Lord for His guidance** (Matthew 1:20-23)
4. Joseph **obeyed the Lord with his actions** (Matthew 1:24)
5. Joseph **honored the Lord by his obedience** (Matthew 1:25)
6. Joseph **waited on the Lord for His leading** (Matthew 2:13-23)
7. Joseph **followed the Lord’s directions for his family** (Luke 2:27-41)

As we read that list, did you think about the incredible spiritual maturity and responsiveness that God can produce in the life of a young person?

To help all of us understand the magnitude of what God did, let’s take a moment and remember that Joseph & Mary are young people. How many of you here this morning, are teens? If you are between 13 and 19 could you please stand for a moment as a tribute to what God did with these two teenagers named Joseph & Mary. Thank you so much.

It is hard to believe that God entrusted the most important event in the history of the world up until that point: **to these two teenagers!** As you listen and learn about Joseph’s faith-prompted obedience, remember that is how much God can actually do with a teen that has given God all of their heart.

What was their secret? Simply that God had their complete attention! Did they avoid troubles, fears, pains, struggles, anguish and hardships? Nope, but they had God with them all the way through.

One of the biggest questions we need to ask ourselves each time we review the message of Christmas, and bump into Joseph and Mary, is the question:

How Much Does God Have of You?

Look back at verses 21 and 23 with me because in those two verses we have presented the **greatest truth** and the **greatest question** you will ever be confronted with. First the greatest truth is about salvation.

*Matthew 1:21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall **call His name Jesus**, for He will **save His people from their sins.**" 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall **call His name Immanuel**," which is translated, "**God with us.**"*

First, the greatest truth of Christianity is—that the instant of our salvation, when our sins were forgiven instantly by the gracious work of Christ on the cross--**we got all of God!** The One who saves us is God with us! We have all of God in the person of Christ who dwells in us!

Then comes the greatest question that each of us need to answer this morning—**does God have all of me?**

How can we apply the story of Joseph to our lives this morning? Go back with me over those seven lessons from Matthew about Joseph. Here are some actions that reflect the Hand of God on your life, and that show you are pleasing Him.

1. Joseph Sought the Lord With his Problems

*Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, **she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.** NKJV*

Can you imagine how painful that event was in Joseph's life?

Everything since his birth had revolved around his family name, his future marriage and the children he would have to continue his tribal identity within Israel. Now in a moment life was in a complete uproar. Everything that was important in his life and the life of his entire extended family, everything lasting in his community, everything about his future—it all had come crashing down.

He was hurt, betrayed, crushed, disillusioned, and ready to quit it all.

Are you ready to start growing spiritually as a young person? Then it is time to take that first step and seek the Lord's help when you have troubles and problems. Teens, are you seeking Him in your hardest times?

In the World of the Bible, betrothal signified more than our modern engagement. *The marriage was almost always arranged by the families of the bride and groom, often without consulting them.*

Look over the wording of Matthew's account. To us who live in a western culture it all sounds quite confusing.

Matthew 1 records that Joseph is ***betrothed*** to Mary in 1:18; then he is planning to ***divorce*** her in 1:19; and then in a few more words she is called his ***wife*** by the angel in 1:20.

But the relationships represent normal Jewish marriage procedure, in which there were three steps.

There² was the engagement. The engagement was often made when the couple were only children. It was usually made through the parents, and it was often made without the couple involved ever having seen each other.

There was the betrothal. The betrothal was what we might call the ratification of the engagement into which the couple had previously entered. Once the betrothal was entered into, it was absolutely binding. It lasted for one year. It could not be terminated in any other way than by divorce. It was at this stage that Joseph and Mary were.

The third stage was the marriage proper, which took place at the end of the year of betrothal. If we remember the normal Jewish wedding customs, then the relationships in this passage are perfectly usual and perfectly clear.

All of that to say that: when God has all of us, we seek the Lord whenever we face problems in our lives. When God has all of us we want: His plan, His way, His wisdom, and most of all—we want to follow God's guidance!

That is the first mark of a person that God has their life under His control: they seek the Lord with their problems. Now look at v. 19:

2. Joseph Allowed the Lord to Make him Compassionate

² *The Gospel of Matthew : Volume.* 2000, c1975 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia

MATTHEW 1:19 *Then Joseph her husband, being a just [man,] and not wanting to make her a public example, **was minded to put her away secretly.*** (NKJV)

Notice how Joseph was going to take this step secretly. Compassionate Joseph planned to put away or break the engagement and betrothal to Mary privately.

“The penalty for adultery³ under Old Testament law was death by stoning, and this penalty applied to infidelity during betrothal as well (Deut 22:23–24). In New Testament times, Joseph would have merely been required to divorce Mary and expose her to shame; the death penalty was rarely if ever executed for this offense. But a woman with a child, divorced for such infidelity, would be hard pressed ever to find another husband, leaving her without means of support if her parents died”.⁴

The second truth we see is that when God has all of us, we become like Christ who was always feeling compassion for the plight of others. Christ's love translated into a feeling that He shared with others in pain, distress, troubles, and fears.

The work of grace within us changes our selfish hard heartedness we were born with into an others consciousness. That is the second mark of a person that God has their life under His control: they are compassionate. Next we see that:

3. Joseph Listened to the Lord For His Guidance

MATTHEW 1:20-23 *But **while he thought about these things**, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." (NKJV)*

When we want to know what God wants us to do, and seek His guidance, we find God's will by listening for and hearing His voice.

Where is the only place we are assured of always hearing God speak? In the place that God has captured and delivered His Words for us: the Bible.

Joseph wanted to please God so he listens to what God tells him to do. If we want to please God we also need to listen to what He wants us to do.

³ Keener, C. S. *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* . InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Ill.

⁴ Keener, C. S. *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* . InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Ill.

How can we hear the voice of God? Right here in His Book. He wants to talk to you every time you will slow down, pull off the highway of life, raise your antenna and let him speak.

Once when we were traveling on an anniversary trip I rented a convertible so we could ride around and feel the wind blowing in our hair (that was way back when I had hair to blow in the wind)!

But we immediately learned a big lesson: no matter how badly we wanted to feel the warmth of the sun shining on our faces and feel the breeze blowing by us—the top of the convertible would not budge until the car was stopped and the parking brake engaged.

God says 'be still' to know that I am God. Stop and listen to Him each day. Devotional times are when we pull over, pull the brake and let Him shine into our life! Are you listening to Him?

The third truth we see is that when God has all of us, we seek His guidance. We stop and wait until we hear His voice.

To get the guidance of the Lord we MUST read what He has told us is His will for our lives, and that is only found in the Bible. That is the third mark of a person that God has their life under His control: they are seeking God's leadership through His Word.

This next truth is vital, after we hear what God has to say the most important decision lays before us: to respond in obedience or just let the desire of God go by. By neglecting to obey we can become guilty of disobedience. Next we see that:

4. Joseph Obeyed the Lord With his actions

*Matthew 1:24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, **did as the angel of the Lord commanded** him and took to him his wife, (NKJV)*

As soon as Joseph heard what God desired, he acted. Without hesitation Joseph models what pleases the Lord: responding with obedience. The key to study of God's Word is application. The mere accumulation of more and more truth only leads to the paralysis of pride. Knowledge always has the danger of puffing us up; but obedience has the power to humble us.

It is not what you say it is what you do. James said 'but be ye doers of the Word' and not merely hearers. Take one truth from the Word and consciously do it, out of love for God. Spiritual growth is like walking: take one step of obedience, and then another, and then another. That is what a godly walk is made of, many small steps of obedience!

The motivation for obedience is explained by Jesus in John 14:21, look there for a moment. Jesus tells us what prompts obedience: it is love.

John 14:21 (NKJV) He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

When we love Jesus we want to please Him by our actions. The more we love Him, please Him with obedience, the more of Himself He reveals to us. The life we have in Christ is an endless growing relationship. We can never come to the end of knowing more about God. It is our eternal joy to know, obey, and experience more and more of God.

That is the fourth truth when God has all of us: we obey His desires expressed in His Word by our actions. The more that I know Him the more that I love Him, and the more of Himself He shares! Wow! Actions under God's control, is the fourth mark of a person whose life belongs to God.

Are you obeying Him? Next we see that:

5. Joseph Honored the Lord By his obedience

Matthew 1:25 and **did not know her** till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus. NKJV

Can you imagine that? Joseph was betrothed, engaged, and now married to the woman of his dreams.

Joseph had waited so long for Mary, worked so hard to get a place ready for her, imagined so many times how wonderful it would be to have her as his wife; and now he hears that God has other plans for the moment.

Waiting for anything is hard for us as humans. But waiting to consummate a marriage must rank up there in the top of the hardest of all waits. But at even such a high price Joseph wanted to honor the Lord.

Not much is said about Joseph in God's Word but this one verse speaks volumes. Joseph put God ahead of his desires, his plans, his needs, and his dreams. God described Joseph as a just or righteous man, and here he shows that so clearly.

This is an example of what incredible discipline is possible by God's grace.

This was not sheer will power and determination, that strength the Bible says will always fail us. This is pure grace. Do you remember what is the first of all the effects that grace has upon the life of a believer? Turn back to Titus 2:11 and underline this in your heart, mind, and life.

Titus 2:11-12 (NKJV) For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

Now listen to v. 12 in the other three key translations of God's Word. Grace that saves us also is:

- (NASB) **instructing us to deny** ungodliness and worldly desires
- (ESV) **training us to renounce ungodliness** and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,
- (NIV) **It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness** and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

If we have come to truly know God's salvation that comes by grace: that grace DOES something to us.

We have the power and the desire to say no to what displeases God.

Paul says in Titus 2: Don't say that you are saved if you do not have a desire to deny sin. Grace is the desire and power to say NO to sin!

Grace gives us the power to make a choice to honor the Lord by honoring His Word, by obeying what He says, and obeying what those He has placed over us in life say! Are you doing that in your family and in your job? Are you honoring Him? That is the fifth truth when God has all of us: we honor the Lord by taking the grace He gives to obey Him!

The One who saved us is the God who now lives with us! We have all of God in the person of Christ who dwells in us!

Then comes the greatest question that each of us need to answer this morning—**does God have all of me?**

APPENDIX:

Next as we turn to Matthew 2:12 we see that:

6. Joseph waited on the Lord For His leading

Matthew 2:13-23 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping [for] her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." 19 Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." 21 Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee. 23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene." (NKJV)

Have you noticed a pattern?

- God speaks, Joseph listens.
- God leads, Joseph follows.

Joseph is like a living illustration of Proverbs 3:5-6. All of you here that know that verse by heart, please repeat it with me:

Joseph listens, following God's will for his life and family. That made Joseph a leader in caring: He cared so much about pleasing God, obeying His will, and following His plan that he took the amazing step of moving his family to Egypt.

Nothing is worse than leaving the Lord out of anything we do. God's leading must be waited for. We can't rush Him, we can't guess what He wants—He wants to make our path straight if we will just wait upon the Lord.

That is the sixth truth when God has all of us: we wait for the Lord's leading: no matter how long, and no matter how hard. Trusting God enough to follow is leading is the sixth mark of a person whose life belongs to God.

Are you waiting for Him?

7. Joseph followed the Lord's directions For Life

Luke 2:27-33 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, **to do for Him according to the custom of the law**, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to [bring] revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. (NKJV)

Luke 2:41 **His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.** (NKJV)

God has laid down the plan, we are just to obey and follow it. Do you know what God's directions are for you: as a son; as a daughter; as a mother; or as a father? God has written out His desires for each of us in His Word.

Joseph was a worshipper, and his family followed him because he took them to the feast. Joseph was a leader in godliness because he followed the Lord's direction for how to live life. Are you following His directions?

The One who saved us is the God who now lives with us! We have all of God in the person of Christ who dwells in us!

Then comes the greatest question that each of us need to answer this morning—**does God have all of me?**

BIRTH AND PREPARATION OF JESUS CHRIST	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
1. Luke's purpose in writing			1:1-4	
2. God became a human being				1:1-18
3. The ancestors of Jesus	1:1-17		3:23-38	
4. An angel promises the birth of John to Zacharias			1:5-25	
5. An angel promises the birth of Jesus to Mary (Nazareth)			1:26-38	
6. Mary visits Elizabeth			1:39-56	
7. John the Baptist is born			1:57-80	
8. An angel appears to Joseph	1:18-25			
9. Jesus is born in Bethlehem (#1)			2:1-7	
10. Shepherds visit Jesus			2:8-20	
11. Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to the temple (Jerusalem)			2:21-40	
12. Visitors arrive from eastern lands	2:1-12			
13. The escape to Egypt	2:13-18			
14. The return to Nazareth	2:19-23			
15. Jesus speaks with the religious teachers (Jerusalem)			2:41-52	

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How can we apply the story of Joseph and Mary to our lives this morning? First seven quick lessons from Matthew that outlines the type of choices that please God, in the life of a teenagers, or anyone for that matter who really wants to let God in to reign in their life. Why don't you write these down as notes and ask the Lord to help you make these choices also for Him in your life.

Joseph sought the Lord with his problems (Matthew 1.18-20a)

Joseph listened to the Lord for His guidance (Matthew 1.20b-23)

Joseph obeyed the Lord with his actions (Matthew 1.24-25a)

Joseph honored the Lord by his obedience (Matthew 1.25b)

Joseph waited on the Lord for His leading (Matthew 2.13-18)

Joseph followed the Lord's directions for his family (Matthew 2.19-21)

Joseph led his family in the ways of the Lord (Matthew 2.22-23)

JOSEPH SOUGHT THE LORD WITH HIS PROBLEMS (MATTHEW 1.18-20A).

Matthew 1:18b "before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit."

Just as the Great Creator God reached down and formed a perfect man named Adam from the Earth, so in similar Omnipotence God reaches down to make a perfect man from Heaven — our Virgin born Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ. "We could no more fathom such a thing than we can fathom God's creating the universe from nothing, His being one God in three Persons, or His giving an entirely new spiritual nature to those who trust in His Son. Understanding of such things will have to await heaven, when we see our Lord "face to face" and "know fully just as [we] have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12). We accept it by faith".⁵

Are you ready to start growing spiritually? Then it is time to take that first step and seek the Lord's help when you have troubles and problems. Are you seeking Him?

JOSEPH LISTENED TO THE LORD FOR HIS GUIDANCE (MATTHEW 1.20B-23).

And just where do we hear the voice of God? Right here in His Book. He wants to talk to you every time you will slow down, pull off the highway of life, raise your antenna and let him speak.

We found out when we rented a convertible once that no matter how badly we wanted to feel the warmth of the sun shining on our faces and feel the breeze blowing by us—the top of the convertible would not budge until the car was stopped and the parking brake engaged. God says 'be still' to know that I am God. Stop and listen to Him each day. Pull over, pull the brake and let Him shine into your life! Are you listening to Him?

⁵ MacArthur, J. 1989. *Matthew*. Moody Press: Chicago

JOSEPH OBEYED THE LORD WITH HIS ACTIONS (MATTHEW 1.24-25A).

It is not what you say it is what you do. James said ‘but be ye doers of the Word’ and not merely hearers. Take one truth from the Word and consciously do it out of love for God. Then another, and then another. That is what a godly walk is made of! Are you obeying Him?

JOSEPH HONORED THE LORD BY HIS OBEDIENCE (MATTHEW 1.25B).

It is a choice we make to honor the Lord by honoring His Word, by obeying what He says and what those He has placed over us in life say! Are you doing that in your family and in your job? Are you honoring Him?

JOSEPH WAITED ON THE LORD FOR HIS LEADING (MATTHEW 2.13-18).

Nothing is worst than leaving the Lord out of anything we do. God’s leading must be waited for. We can’t rush Him, we can’t guess what He wants—He wants to make our path straight if we will just wait upon the Lord. Are you waiting for Him?

JOSEPH FOLLOWED THE LORD’S DIRECTIONS FOR HIS FAMILY (MATTHEW 2.19-21).

God has laid down the plan, we are just to obey and follow it. Do you know what God’s directions are for you as a son? As a daughter? As a mother? As a father? Are you following His directions?

JOSEPH LED HIS FAMILY IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD (MATTHEW 2.22-23).

We remember Joseph because of these few words. They started with him being righteous. He was a man you could count on to do the little things God delights in. Are you going in the way of the Lord? That simple and well know verse sums it all up:

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.

Second, more deepening truths to live out as we also walk with the Lord:

JOSEPH WAS COMPASSIONATE.

MATTHEW 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just [man,] and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. (NKJV) **he planned to put away Mary privately.** Matthew 1:19 “Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly”.

“The penalty for adultery⁶ under Old Testament law was death by stoning, and this penalty applied to infidelity during betrothal as well (Deut 22:23–24). In New Testament times, Joseph would have merely been required to divorce Mary and expose her to shame; the death penalty was rarely if ever executed for this offense. (Betrothals were so binding that if a woman’s fiancé died, she was considered a widow; betrothals could otherwise be terminated only by divorce.) But a woman with a child, divorced for such infidelity, would be hard pressed ever to find another husband, leaving her without means of support if her parents died”.⁷

JOSEPH WAS SENSITIVE.

MATTHEW 1:20-24 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." 24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, (NKJV)

There are very few New Testament verses about Mary. It is likely that she was a native of Nazareth and that she came from a relatively poor family.

Her actual name was Miryam. In English this Hebrew name is usually rendered by the spelling “Miriam” in the *Old Testament* and “Mary” in the New Testament.

From Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, and John 19:25 we learn she had a sister named Salome, the mother of James and John (who therefore were Jesus’ cousins).

From Luke 3 we receive her Davidic lineage. If, as many believe, the Eli (or Heli) of Luke 3:23 was Joseph’s father-in-law (Matthew gives Joseph’s father as Jacob, 1:16), then Eli was Mary’s father.

We know that Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, was Mary’s “relative” (Luke 1:36), probably her cousin. Those are the only relatives, besides her husband and children, of whom the New Testament speaks.

JOSEPH WAS OBEDIENT.

MATTHEW 2:13-19 Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all

⁶ Keener, C. S. *The IVP Bible background commentary : New Testament* . InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Ill.

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its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping [for] her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." 19 But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, (NKJV)

Joseph was a leader in Caring. He was a protector of his family: he made decisions for the future of his family going to Egypt.

JOSEPH WAS A HARD WORKER.

MATTHEW 2: 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: "He will be called a Nazarene." (NIV)

Joseph was a leader in God's order for the home. He was a provider: he went to Nazareth and worked.

JOSEPH PASSED ON HIS TRADE TO JESUS.

MARK 6:3 "Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?" And they were offended at Him. (NKJV).

He was a modeler: Taught Jesus his trade and that took time side by side Mowing, driving, care for the car, finances, etc. Men just put some time in them each week.

JOSEPH FOLLOW GOD'S WORD FOR RAISING CHILDREN.

Luke 2:27-33 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to [bring] revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. (NKJV)

JOSEPH LED HIS FAMILY IN WORSHIP.

Luke 2:41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. (NKJV)

He was a worshiper, he took them to the feast Joseph was a leader in godliness. He was a Maintainer:

Proverbs 22:28 Do not remove the ancient landmark Which your fathers have set.

101205AM GCM-46 Joseph the Quiet Man

As we open to Matthew 1, whenever I look at the cast of Christmas: one member stands out because he is so quiet.

Joseph is one of the main characters: he opens the Christmas story in Matthew 1 and closes the story in Luke 2. In case you didn't think what that means, he's in every scene in all 4 of the chapters devoted to Christ's birth. Joseph can be called:

THE QUIET MAN

But even though he is central to all the events, one of the key players, the first amazing fact is that **Joseph has no recorded words**. Joseph thinks, prays, and obeys: but never is recorded as saying anything.

I like to say that if I was ever asked to be in a Christmas play, Joseph is the part in the play I would choose because: he never said a word, he just stands there smiling and doing what he is told to do!

The second and even more amazing truth about Joseph is that the **ONLY** thing we are absolutely sure Joseph ever said was: **Joseph was the first to declare the Name of JESUS**. Just as the Scriptures say, it was on the 8th day after Christ's birth, when He was circumcised, that Joseph stepped forward and spoke the Name that is above every name and said His Name will be called: Jesus!

This season of remembering Christ's Birth, pause with me in God's Word and extract some powerful truths by observing what the Scriptures reveal and imply about this amazing young man Joseph, who walked with the Lord.

It was nearly 2,000 years ago that God spoke to a young, teenaged couple. They had been engaged for marriage since their childhood, by their parents. Mary⁸ was by all available data from this historic period somewhere between 14 and 17 years of age, and Joseph was most likely between the ages of 18 and 20.

Their lives up to this historic moment had been exemplary, in fact they were chosen by God because He knew He could count on them. Think about how many right choices Joseph had made at such a young age. He was not perfect, but he had chosen to respond properly to the authority around him—from his heart.

In Matthew 1:19 Joseph was described by God as “just”. He was a young man of conviction. He had chosen the path of practicing self-denial. God knew he was pure, had chosen pure habits, and fled sexual sins.

Those choices made him just the man God could use at this historic moment. And Mary was the same. She was a woman of the Word. She lived her faith, and considered herself a bond slave for the Lord. From God's Word we find that:

JOSEPH'S LIFE IS A POWERFUL EXAMPLE

⁸ Keener, C. S., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament*. InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove, Ill., electronic edition.

Joseph is such a powerful lesson to all who will look closely. Joseph was willing to obey even if he didn't understand what God was doing with his life.

Matthew outlines Joseph's life as a collection of the type of choices that please God in the life of a teenager, or anyone for that matter who really wants to let God in to reign in their life.

We are only going to examine the first 3 or 4, but why don't you write these all down as notes and ask the Lord to help you make these choices also for Him in your life.

Joseph sought the Lord with his problems (Matthew 1:18)

Joseph allowed the Lord to make him compassionate (Matthew 1:19)

Joseph listened to the Lord for His guidance (Matthew 1:20-23)

Joseph obeyed the Lord with his actions (Matthew 1:24)

Joseph honored the Lord by his obedience (Matthew 1:25)

Joseph waited on the Lord for His leading (Matthew 2:13-23)

Joseph followed the Lord's directions for his family (Luke 2:27-41)

As we read that list, did you think about the incredible spiritual maturity and responsiveness that God can produce in the life of a young person?

To help all of us understand the magnitude of what God did, let's take a moment and remember that Joseph & Mary are young people. How many of you here today, are teens? If you are between 13 and 19 could you please stand for a moment as a tribute to what God did with these two teenagers named Joseph & Mary. Thank you so much.

It is hard to believe that God entrusted the most important event in the history of the world up until that point: **to these two teenagers!** As you listen and learn about Joseph's faith-prompted obedience, remember that is how much God can actually do with a teen that has given God all of their heart.

What was their secret? Simply that God had their complete attention! Did they avoid troubles, fears, pains, struggles, anguish and hardships? Nope, but they had God with them all the way through.

How can we apply the story of Joseph to our lives today? Go back with me over those seven lessons from Matthew about Joseph. Here are some actions that reflect the Hand of God on your life, and that show you are pleasing Him.

1. JOSEPH SOUGHT THE LORD WITH HIS PROBLEMS

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, **she was found with child** of the Holy Spirit. NKJV

Can you imagine how painful that event was in Joseph's life?

Everything since his birth had revolved around his family name, his future marriage and the children he would have to continue his tribal identity within Israel. Now in a moment life was in a complete uproar. Everything that was important in his life and the life of his entire

extended family, everything lasting in his community, everything about his future—it all had come crashing down.

He was hurt, betrayed, crushed, disillusioned, and ready to quit it all.

Are you ready to start growing spiritually as a young person? Then it is time to take that first step and seek the Lord's help when you have troubles and problems. Teens, are you seeking Him in your hardest times?

In the World of the Bible, betrothal signified more than our modern engagement. *The marriage was almost always arranged by the families of the bride and groom, often without consulting them.*

That is the first mark of a person that God has their life under His control: they seek the Lord with their problems. Now look at v. 19:

2. JOSEPH ALLOWED THE LORD TO MAKE HIM COMPASSIONATE

MATTHEW 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just [man,] and not wanting to make her a public example, **was minded to put her away secretly.** (NKJV)

Notice how Joseph was going to take this step secretly. Compassionate Joseph planned to put away or break the engagement and betrothal to Mary privately. Joseph's love translated into a feeling that He shared with others in pain, distress, troubles, and fears.

The work of grace within us changes our selfish hard heartedness we were born with into an others consciousness. That is the second mark of a person that God has their life under His control: they are compassionate. Next we see that:

3. JOSEPH LISTENED TO THE LORD FOR HIS GUIDANCE

MATTHEW 1:20-23 But **while he thought about these things**, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." 22 So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." (NKJV)

When we want to know what God wants us to do, and seek His guidance, we find God's will by listening for and hearing His voice.

Where is the only place we are assured of always hearing God speak? In the place that God has captured and delivered His Words for us: the Bible.

Joseph wanted to please God so he listens to what God tells him to do. If we want to please God we also need to listen to what He wants us to do.

Next we see that:

4. JOSEPH OBEYED THE LORD WITH HIS ACTIONS

Matthew 1:24 Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, **did as the angel of the Lord commanded** him and took to him his wife, (NKJV)

As soon as Joseph heard what God desired, he acted. Without hesitation Joseph models what pleases the Lord: responding with obedience. The key to study of God's Word is application. The mere accumulation of more and more truth only leads to the paralysis of pride. Knowledge always has the danger of puffing us up; but obedience has the power to humble us.

It is not what you say it is what you do. James said 'but be ye doers of the Word' and not merely hearers. Take one truth from the Word and consciously do it, out of love for God. Spiritual growth is like walking: take one step of obedience, and then another, and then another. That is what a godly walk is made of, many small steps of obedience!

The motivation for obedience is explained by Jesus in John 14:21, look there for a moment. Jesus tells us what prompts obedience: it is love.

John 14:21 (NKJV) He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

When we love Jesus we want to please Him by our actions. The more we love Him, please Him with obedience, the more of Himself He reveals to us. The life we have in Christ is an endless growing relationship. We can never come to the end of knowing more about God. It is our eternal joy to know, obey, and experience more and more of God.

That is the fourth truth when God has all of us: we obey His desires expressed in His Word by our actions. The more that I know Him the more that I love Him, and the more of Himself He shares! Wow! Actions under God's control, is the fourth mark of a person whose life belongs to God.

Are you obeying Him? Next we see that:

5. JOSEPH HONORED THE LORD BY HIS OBEDIENCE

Matthew 1:25 and **did not know her** till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus. NKJV

Can you imagine that? Joseph was betrothed, engaged, and now married to the woman of his dreams.

Joseph had waited so long for Mary, worked so hard to get a place ready for her, imagined so many times how wonderful it would be to have her as his wife; and now he hears that God has other plans for the moment.

Waiting for anything is hard for us as humans. But waiting to consummate a marriage must rank up there in the top of the hardest of all waits. But at even such a high price Joseph wanted to honor the Lord.

Not much is said about Joseph in God's Word but this one verse speaks volumes. Joseph put God ahead of his desires, his plans, his needs, and his dreams. God described Joseph as a just or righteous man, and here he shows that so clearly.

This is an example of what incredible discipline is possible by God's grace.

This was not sheer will power and determination, that strength the Bible says will always fail us. This is pure grace. Do you remember what is the first of all the effects that grace has upon the life of a believer? Turn back to Titus 2:11 and underline this in your heart, mind, and life.

Titus 2:11-12 (NKJV) For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, 12 teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

Now listen to v. 12 in the other three key translations of God's Word. Grace that saves us also is:

(NASB) **instructing us to deny** ungodliness and worldly desires

(ESV) **training us to renounce ungodliness** and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,

(NIV) **It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness** and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

If we have come to truly know God's salvation that comes by grace: that grace DOES something to us.

We have the power and the desire to say no to what displeases God.

Paul says in Titus 2: Don't say that you are saved if you do not have a desire to deny sin. Grace is the desire and power to say NO to sin!

Grace gives us the power to make a choice to honor the Lord by honoring His Word, by obeying what He says, and obeying what those He has placed over us in life say! Are you doing that in your family and in your job? Are you honoring Him? That is the fifth truth when God has all of us: we honor the Lord by taking the grace He gives to obey Him!

The One who saved us is the God who now lives with us! We have all of God in the person of Christ who dwells in us!

Then comes the greatest question that each of us need to answer today—***does God have all of me?***

Next as we turn to Matthew 2:13 we see that:

6. JOSEPH WAITED ON THE LORD FOR HIS LEADING

Matthew 2:13-23 Now when they had departed, **behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream**, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him." 14 **When he arose, he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed for Egypt**, 15 and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My Son." 16 Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and he sent forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. 17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying: 18 "A voice was heard in Ramah, Lamentation, weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping [for] her children, Refusing to be comforted, Because they are no more." 19 Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead." 21 Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel. 22 But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. **And being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside into the region of Galilee.** 23 And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, "He shall be called a Nazarene." (NKJV)

Have you noticed a pattern?

God speaks, Joseph listens.

God leads, Joseph follows.

Joseph is like a living illustration of Proverbs 3:5-6. All of you here that know that verse by heart, please repeat it with me:

Joseph listens, following God's will for his life and family. That made Joseph a leader in caring: He cared so much about pleasing God, obeying His will, and following His plan that he took the amazing step of moving his family to Egypt.

Nothing is worst than leaving the Lord out of anything we do. God's leading must be waited for. We can't rush Him, we can't guess what He wants—He wants to make our path straight if we will just wait upon the Lord.

That is the sixth truth when God has all of us: we wait for the Lord's leading: no matter how long, and no matter how hard. Trusting God enough to follow is leading is the sixth mark of a person whose life belongs to God.

Are you waiting for Him?

7. JOSEPH FOLLOWED THE LORD'S DIRECTIONS FOR LIFE

Luke 2:27-33 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, **to do for Him according to the custom of the law**, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to [bring] revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel." 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. (NKJV)

Luke 2:41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. (NKJV)

God has laid down the plan, we are just to obey and follow it. Do you know what God's directions are for you: as a son; as a daughter; as a mother; or as a father? God has written out His desires for each of us in His Word.

Joseph was a worshipper, and his family followed him because he took them to the feast. Joseph was a leader in godliness because he followed the Lord's direction for how to live life. Are you following His directions?