

Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual
Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

December 4, 2022

Day 1: Matthew 1:18

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.

As you read the Christmas story in both Matthew and Luke notice how the persons involved had to work through their disappointments. When Joseph found that Mary - his intended wife - was expecting, the future he had planned had gone away. It was replaced by a very hard decision and no matter how he chose, he believed things would turn out bad. We know the end of the story but we forget that when Joseph was told his future wife was expecting he did not know how things would work out.

Question: What is the biggest surprise you have ever had?

Challenge: Find out what the story of your birth was.

Scripture: Jeremiah 30:18-24

Day 2: Matthew 1:19

Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

Joseph did not take what was his by rights. His response to Mary's expecting a baby is a sign of the new way Jesus called people to relate to each other. No more are relationships to be built on power or pride but on love and humility. Joseph not only did not go ahead with a divorce but he found a way not to make Mary's life worse. Joseph not taking his rights by divorcing her would be like a person winning the lottery and deciding to let the government have the money. Jesus ushered in a new era of relationships. We who call ourselves Christian need to follow Joseph's example and treat others with grace and mercy.

Question: What was the biggest disappointment you have had?

Challenge: Look at the news or newspapers to see if you can find a current example of how Joseph acted toward Mary.

Scripture: Isaiah 40:1-11

Day 3: Matthew 1:20-21

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

It was through God's intervention that Joseph made his decision to go ahead with his plans to take Mary as his wife. Joseph again had to give up on a future in order to go ahead with the marriage. Once he was married he could not divorce her except for cause. If he married her he would live with the knowledge that the child was not his. God intervened to tell Joseph that even though the child is not his it is from God. Joseph was asked to follow God's lead not knowing where God would lead him.

Question: How do you feel about adopting a child?

Challenge: What would you do in Joseph's situation? Be honest, nobody will know how you answered but you.

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:1-17

Day 4: Matthew 1:22-23

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"—which means, "God with us."

We do not know if Joseph or Mary were aware of the words of the prophet. They may have been but we just do not know. Up to this point in history God was not very approachable. One had to give their sacrifice to a priest and the priest would do the sacrifice. One could pray but prayer was a duty, not a way to feel closer to God. We have a God who comes to us. This concept alone brings us hope. If God would come to us then we must be worth something. For the infinite God to become part of the finite universe is a miracle indeed.

Question: Which prophet said the above?

Challenge: How have you felt God being with you?

Scripture: Luke 1:26-38

Day 5: Matthew 1:24-25

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus

Joseph is not only a forerunner of what Christian attitudes are but also a forerunner of what faith would be. Faith is an action word; it is expressed as we follow God's lead. Faith provides the proof that we need in order to go forth in life. Just as Mary and Joseph went on a journey to Bethlehem without knowing the end result, so we go on a journey in life not knowing the end result.

Question: Do you think that God communicates with us in dreams?

Challenge: What is the most admirable aspect of Joseph's response to Mary?

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-9

Day 6: Matthew 1:17

Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Christ.

Jesus comes from a good family and royal family. God anointed the Patriarchs and the Kings to carry out God's plan of salvation for all people and creation. Jesus is the last in the line of singular royalty. From Jesus onward all who call themselves followers of Jesus are a royal priesthood. We are to help carry out God's plan of salvation by sharing the Good News - Christ is born, Christ has died, Christ has risen and Christ shall come again.

Question: It is said that a person in this country is just 5 handshakes away from a president. Is this true for you?

Challenge: Trace your line back to your great-grandparents and then see what traits have come through to you.

Scripture: Luke 3:23-38