



## CrossRoads Notes:

Turn your Bibles to Matthew 1:18-24

**Title:** Christmas Courage

**Theme:** The Courage of Joseph

**Series:** The Cast of Christmas

Listen as I read Matthew 1:18-24: Pray!

**Introduction:** *There are many miracles connected with the birth of Christ.* The best way of overcoming the world's view of Christmas is to have a Biblical understanding of the miraculous events that took place at the first Christmas. I remember the first Christmas after becoming a Christian, the holiday season became so exciting to me because the Holy Spirit illuminated within me what Christmas was really about. The best way to maintain and restore joy for the Christmas season is to meditate upon what the Word of God says about the lives of those who were so closely involved in the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

**Interrogative Sentence:** *Just what is found in Joseph's life that made him such a valuable person in the gospel of Jesus Christ? Can these character traits be found in the children of God today?*

**Propositions:** *I would propose to you that the Biblical account of the life of Joseph holds truths that the Holy Spirit of Christ wants you to grasp this Christmas season.* Many have Biblical revelation or understanding of the life of Joseph. However, Christians who live a life expressing that the birth of Christ is an event worth celebrating take time to invite the Holy Spirit to illuminate Biblical truth into their hearts.

**Transitional Sentence:** *The first truth worth grasping is that the Lord takes ordinary men and makes useful vessels of them.* (Luke 2:21-14) (Luke 2:27) Joseph as head of his family knew what was written in the Book of Leviticus chapter 12 and made the offering required for a woman who was poor financially. (Who's Who in the Bible; The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia)

This is a great encouragement to all Christians. Most Christians are not going to be famous, have a place of authority nor be rich in the world's eyes. They can, however, become very important in proclaiming the good news of the gospel of Christ as long as they are willing to seek the will of the Lord through the written Word of God and obey what the Holy Spirit of Christ calls them to do. (1 Peter 2:9) It has been very well said, "God takes ordinary people and does extraordinary things through them."

**Transitional Sentence:** *It takes a courageous man to die to self, seek out the Lord's will and pray through to completion of God's plan for him.* It also takes courage to live as Joseph, a moral upright life. (Matthew 1:18-19, 35)

“Righteous” (dikaios) in this passage of Scripture means to be merciful, kind and tender. The application is that Joseph was not a man given to passionate vengeance, rather he had a right relationship with God. Joseph lived in accordance with God’s compelling standard. (The Expositors Bible Commentary; Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament; The Completer Word Study of the New Testament)

### Joseph’s response – Shock / Deep Sorrow / Felt Betrayed

According to William Barclay there were three major steps to the Jewish marriage procedure. Here are two of them, 1.) the engagement was often made through the parents, or through a professional match-maker. 2.) The betrothal stage and by this stage the woman involved could break off the engagement if she chose not to go through with the marriage. It is in this stage the marriage becomes binding and it lasted one year. They were referred to as man and wife, although consummation of the marriage is not permitted until the marriage ceremony is over.

It was during the betrothal stage when Joseph learned of Mary being with child. According to Deuteronomy 24:1, Joseph, from what he could see in the present circumstance before his dream, had every Biblical right to write a certificate of divorce.

Customary for the groom to give a marriage present to the bride’s family. This gift to the family was a form of compensation and sealed a covenant between the two families. The gift could have been in the form of money or service or any other consideration that was agreeable to all the parties involved. (The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia; Genesis 34:12; Exodus 22:16; 1 Samuel 18:25; Genesis 29; Joshua 15:16)

At this time in history we have two people called of God to play a very important part of the Christmas story, and they are both being tested in their faith in God. Mary had been told ahead of time that she would be with child by the power of the Holy Spirit and what to name the child. (Luke 1:31)

Joseph knew the consequence of being accused of adultery and he most likely knew how the world of his day handled those accused of it. Those accused and convicted were met with public disgrace. In Joseph’s day in Egypt the punishment was cutting of the nose, in Persia the punishment was cutting of the nose and ears and in Judea the punishment could have meant being stoned to death. In Joseph’s day most often a certificate of divorce stated the reason for the divorce.

Not only did Joseph have the courage to live out the mercy of God, he had the courage to subdue the flesh so he could protect Mary’s purity until the Child was born, thus, bringing us the surety of the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 1:24-25) I am fully persuaded that Joseph had the Godly character he had because he was a man of the Word of God.

Hearing the angel quote what the Prophet Isaiah said 700 years before in his dream, (Matthew 1:22-23) was more than enough to give Joseph the courage he needed to subdue the flesh and trust in his God.

Christians with the courage of Joseph will make themselves available and aware of what the written Word of God says. Knowing God's Word and being open and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading will make them a very important part of proclaiming Jesus as the Savior of the world, not only at Christmas time but in every part of their lives.

The high and safe road is to rejoice in God's gracious intervention to communicate privately with those who are sold out to His will. All Christians can take courage. The Lord is always ready and able to intercede in their lives in the most difficult time of life. He has a great plan for using Christians and allowing them to be a very important part of proclaiming the truths of Christmas.

**Transitional Sentence:** *Joseph had the courage to live a life of righteousness, expressing compassion, mercy and tenderness to the person he loved.* His courage to live a life of righteousness opened the door for him to receive revelation from God. (Matthew 1:20-21)

What we have here is divine revelation from God to his obedient servant who was enabled to die to himself for the sake of others. There are two key aspects to revelation from God that is worth grasping here. One is God's self-revelation found in the entire Word of God. The second is the ways and means through which the Lord discloses Himself, His will and His purpose to His people. (The New International Dictionary of the Bible)

At this time in history Jesus' birth needed another immediate intervention from God to get a person ordained for this life changing event on the right track. It is very possible that Joseph prayerfully thought on the issue of Mary being with child in the stillness of the night. It was very likely while he was alone in prayer with the Lord, being totally dependent on God and having a heart prepared for obedience, Joseph fell asleep. During this sleep the Lord gave Joseph just what he needed most in a very difficult time in life for him. (A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory; The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible; Thru the Bible)

Revelation God had four purposes. 1.) To give assurance to Joseph. 2.) The purpose of this revelation from God in a dream was to give Joseph explanation. 3.) This revelation from God to Joseph was to reveal the destiny of the child born of a virgin, Mary, the woman pledged to him for lifetime marriage. (Matthew 1:21, 23) 4.) This revelation from God to Joseph was for comfort and guidance. Think of the comfort that must have come to him as the Lord revealed to him that Biblical prophecy was being fulfilled. Mary was telling the truth and God had a plan for them.

Christians, as they are serving the Lord in a heart after God, will at times face situations that seem impossible to determine the Lord's will. It is in those times they must have the courage of Joseph, die to self, seek the whole counsel of God's Word and pray through expecting God to answer. He will give His revelation to them and it will bring comfort, explanation, and direction. Instead of calling a friend, Christians are better off calling upon the Lord's intervention.

Christians who have the courage of Joseph in life's tough circumstances have the same revelation about the Lord as the psalmist who wrote, (Psalm 91:14-16)

Let the situation that you are in right now establish courage in the Lord and prepare you to be a very special part in the Christmas story that should be proclaimed today.

**Transitional Sentence:** Joseph was an ordinary man who had the courage to live righteously and whose lifestyle enabled him receive revelation from God and courageously protect his family. (Matthew 2:13-23)

Truths worth clinging to for today are, 1.) We do not need courage when things are going smooth and we are drinking in the blessings of God. However, when the enemy comes in like a flood courage in God's protective hand is needed. 2.) Courage is born in the Christian's heart by seeking the Lord in prayerful reading of God's Word and trusting in Him to reveal His truths. 3.) Children need dads who are courageously living for the Lord Jesus, not those who can buy the most numerous or most expensive toys. Fathers who seek the Lord and know that the children they are raising have been created for God's glory. They are maintaining a relationship with the Lord in order to understand what direction the Lord wants them take in raising the children God has given them. 4.) Wives need courageous husbands who love their wives as Christ loved the church and are willing to protect their wives from anything that would get in the way of their accomplishing God's special call on their lives.

**In Closing:** *Because we live on this side of Christmas, Christians want to rush to the end of the story where everything turns out okay just like it did for Joseph and Mary.* When Christians just focus on the announcement of the birth of Christ on that first Christmas they miss out on the work that God wants to do in their lives. The Lord wants to prepare born again Christians to courageously live out their part of proclaiming the good news of the birth of Christ.

Very little is said about Joseph in Christian writings and in Scripture, however what is said about him the Holy Spirit wants to place deep within your spiritual heart. Joseph was a "righteous man." The Hebrew word for "righteous man" (*tsaddiys*) means that a man is known for his uncompromising obedience to the Torah, the law of Moses. The application for today is that Christians need to live uncompromising to the whole counsel of the written Word of God. Let us Pray!