

### 3: *Experiencing God's Peace* ☆ *The Christmas Experience*

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Joseph is more than an extra in a nativity scene. We learn a valuable lesson from this righteous man who obeyed God's plan when others might have run away.

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The Jewish engagement meant that Joseph was legally recognized as Mary's husband. For example, if Mary had died, Joseph would have been considered a widower.<sup>1</sup> Before their wedding, Joseph discovers the awful truth - Mary is pregnant...and it can't be by him. Joseph's heart had to be deeply hurt as he believes he has been betrayed.

What will happen now? Scriptural punishment for an engaged Jewish woman's sexual misconduct was death - for her as well as the man who she had been with (Deut. 22:23-24), The occupying Roman Empire would not allow the Jewish courts to carry this out. So, instead of being stoned, Mary would be shunned. Once this was public, Joseph could have divorced her received quite a healthy sum as the Jewish courts' ruled in his favor.<sup>2</sup> That's not how it turned out, however.

#### **The Character of Joseph**

##### **Matthew 1:18-19 (NET)**

<sup>18</sup> Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened this way. While his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Because Joseph, her husband to be, was **a righteous man**, and because he did not want to disgrace her, he intended to divorce her privately.

Here we find out about Joseph's character - **a righteous man**. He was RIGHT with God. Things don't always work out the way we want, even for people who are RIGHT with God. From Joseph's perspective he has been betrayed.

**You want to see a person's true self?** Look how they respond when they feel betrayed.

- Do they quickly seek **revenge**...or do quietly pray the betrayer's **repentance**?
- Do they long for the betrayer to be **ridiculed** or **restored**?

Joseph doesn't want Mary ridiculed. Maybe she can be restored, have a chance to marry another & experience life...even though it wasn't with him.

#### **Joseph's Dream**

##### **Matthew 1:20-21 (NET)**

<sup>20</sup> When he had contemplated 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 as your wife, because the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will give birth to a son and you will name him **Jesus**, because **he will save his people from their sins.**"

The name **Jesus**, says Max Lucado, "*was so typical it would appear 2-3 times on any classroom roll.*" "Yahweh Saves," (Jesus) is common, yet unique, **because he will save his people from their sins.**

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<sup>1</sup> R. H. Gundry, Matthew: A Commentary on his Literary and Theological Art, 21

<sup>2</sup> Craig S. Keener, The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, UK: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 91.

## Prophecy Fulfilled

**Matthew 1:22-23** (NET)

<sup>22</sup> This all happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: <sup>23</sup> *“Look! The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him Emmanuel,”* which means *“God with us.”* [from Isaiah 7:14]

We aren't told what Joseph felt at this point, but we ARE told what He DID.

## Joseph's Obedience

**Matthew 1:24-25** (NET)

<sup>24</sup> When Joseph awoke from sleep **he did what the angel of the Lord told him.** He took his wife, <sup>25</sup> but did not have marital relations with her until she gave birth to a son, whom **he named Jesus.**

Doing what God wanted wasn't easy, but it was right.

How encouraging would that be...to KNOW that you are DOING exactly what God has said!?

## **BIG TRUTH** WE EXPERIENCE GOD'S PEACE WHEN WE OBEY GOD'S PLAN.

Have YOU ever experienced a time when family & friends encouraged you to go in a different direction than where God is leading? What about the times when others tried to persuade you follow what CULTURE says rather than what the SCRIPTURE says?

◎ **CULTURE:** Seek revenge against those who have harmed you.

★ **SCRIPTURE:** Bless persecutors (Rom 12:4), love enemies & pray for them (Matt. 5:44).

◎ **CULTURE:** Seek sexual pleasure outside of marriage.

★ **SCRIPTURE:** Wait for your mate (Eph. 5:3; 1 Cor. 6:18–7:5).

◎ **CULTURE:** Spend all your money on yourself & family.

★ **SCRIPTURE:** Care for others & further the Kingdom (Matt. 6:19–21; Luke 12:16–21).

◎ **CULTURE:** Use dirty language & slander others.

★ **SCRIPTURE:** Words are for building up & blessing (Eph. 5:4; James 3:5–12).

While others are trying to persuade you to follow the crowd, you can KNOW you are doing exactly what God says. It's then that you will come to see that...

## **BIG TRUTH** WE EXPERIENCE GOD'S PEACE WHEN WE OBEY GOD'S PLAN.

### Are you experiencing God's Peace?

Would you call a follower of Jesus and share your questions? It might go like this: “I am interested in learning more about Jesus and I have questions. Will you help me?”



Read & live 1 John.

\* WEEK 3 VIDEO - search “Christmas Experience” on [RightNowMedia.org](http://RightNowMedia.org)