



## Shelby Christian Church

CHRISTMAS - HOLY MOMENTS: WHEN IT IS HARD TO OBEY

MATTHEW 1:18-25, JOSHUA 1:6-9 \* 11/30/2025

### MAIN POINT

Obedience

### INTRODUCTION

**Have you ever faced an unexpected event that completely changed your plans?  
How did you handle the shock or sudden shift?**

Moments like these can deeply affect our walk with God. Surprising circumstances—whether thrilling or heartbreaking—can turn our world upside down. A person might receive a dream job offer before finishing school and suddenly face a tough choice. Others may get an unexpected medical diagnosis, experience the end of a relationship, or encounter someone new and fall in love. Any of these situations can disrupt our plans and leave us feeling anxious or uncertain. Even good news can overwhelm us!

Obedience to God is rarely convenient, and often it requires stepping into the unknown. Throughout Scripture, the people God used most were those who obeyed before they saw the outcome. Their courage wasn't rooted in themselves, but in trusting God's character.

Imagine how life-changing it was for Mary to learn she would bear a child by the Holy Spirit before she had ever been with a man. And consider Joseph—how must he have felt hearing this news? Their lives were forever altered, and they surely struggled to understand why this was happening. Yet their response was to trust and obey in God's goodness. Through their son, the Lord would bring salvation to His people.

### UNDERSTANDING

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 1:18-19

**How does the text describe Joseph's initial dilemma when he discovered Mary's pregnancy? What were his options?**

**The text calls Joseph a "righteous man." How does his plan to divorce Mary "quietly" demonstrate this righteousness?**

**What does this reveal about Joseph's character, his love for Mary, and his understanding of Jewish law**

These verses describe how the birth of Jesus came about. Mary was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit before she and Joseph came together as husband and wife. Betrothal was legally binding—breaking it required a formal divorce. Joseph discovering Mary's pregnancy would have been a major scandal. Joseph, described as a righteous man, did not want to expose her to public shame or legal

punishment. He wanted to be faithful to the law yet compassionate toward Mary. Instead, he planned to quietly end their engagement, showing both his integrity and compassion.

#### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 1:20-21**

**How did the angel's message in the dream change Joseph's perspective and plans?**

**What did the angel tell Joseph to do?**

**How did the angel's message help Joseph overcome his fear and confusion?**

**The angel reveals the child's name will be Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins." What does this tell us about the purpose of Jesus's birth?**

As Joseph was considering quietly ending his engagement to Mary, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. The angel told him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife because her child was conceived by the Holy Spirit. Joseph must trust something he cannot fully understand. The angel also revealed that the baby would be a son, and Joseph was to name Him Jesus, because He would save His people from their sins.

#### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 1:22-23**

**The angel also says the child will be called "Emmanuel, which means 'God with us.'" How does this prophetic name speak to God's presence even in difficult circumstances? What does this mean to you personally?**

**In what moments of your life have you especially felt God's presence?**

These verses explain that Mary's miraculous pregnancy fulfilled what God had spoken through the prophet Isaiah. The prophecy said that a virgin would conceive and give birth to a son, and He would be called Immanuel, meaning "God with us." Matthew highlights that Jesus' birth is the direct fulfillment of this promise, showing that God has come to dwell with His people.

#### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 1:24-25**

**Joseph obeyed "immediately." What is one area where you feel called to take a step of obedient faith?**

**What can Joseph's example teach us about surrendering our plans to God?**

**How can we live each day with an awareness that God is with us?**

After receiving the angel's message, Joseph immediately obeys God. He takes Mary as his wife, accepting her and the child she carries as part of God's plan. However, Joseph does not consummate the marriage until after Jesus is born, honoring the miraculous nature of the virgin birth. When the child is born, Joseph names Him "Jesus," exactly as the angel commanded—publicly acknowledging Jesus as his legal son and fulfilling the prophecy that the Messiah would come from David's line.

#### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 1:6-9**

**What stands out to you most in this passage—God's commands, God's promises, or Joshua's role? Why?**

**Why do you think God repeats the command "Be strong and courageous" three times? What might Joshua have been feeling at this moment?**

**What does it mean to be “strong and courageous” in your own walk with God today? Can you think of a situation where you needed this kind of courage?**

**In verse 7, God tells Joshua not to turn from the law “to the right or the left.” What does this look like practically for believers today? How do we stay focused on obedience?**

**God promises Joshua success as he obeys His Word. How should we understand “success” from a biblical perspective? How is it different from worldly success?**

God commissions Joshua to lead Israel into the Promised Land, encouraging him to be strong and courageous. He reminds Joshua to obey God’s law carefully, meditate on it consistently, and assures him that success comes through faithfulness. Most importantly, God promises His continual presence: “The Lord your God is with you wherever you go,” giving Joshua confidence and courage for the task ahead.

## APPLICATION

**Joseph likely experienced fear, confusion, and uncertainty. How can we remain merciful people as Joseph was towards Mary? What helps you trust God when life doesn’t make sense?**

**How does Joseph’s obedience to God’s instruction after the dream show his commitment? When our lives are turned upside down, what are some ways we can find comfort that, in the end, our perseverance will be worth it?**

**What does this passage teach us about trusting God when circumstances are confusing or don't make sense to us?**

**In what ways can we apply the principle of listening to God over the opinions of others in our own lives?**

## PRAYER

## COMMENTARY

### Matthew 1:18-25

Verses 18–19 — Matthew begins with the announcement of Jesus’ miraculous birth, emphasizing that Mary was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit before her marriage to Joseph. Joseph’s reaction shows his righteousness and compassion. He intends to quietly end the engagement rather than publicly shame Mary, balancing obedience to the Law with mercy. This demonstrates that God works through ordinary people who act faithfully even in difficult situations.

Verses 20–21 — An angel appears to Joseph in a dream, reassuring him not to fear taking Mary as his wife. The angel explains that the child is conceived by the Holy Spirit, identifying Jesus’ divine origin and messianic role. The name Jesus (meaning “The Lord saves”) signifies His mission: to save His people from their sins, linking the Incarnation directly to God’s plan of salvation.

Verses 22–23 — Matthew connects Jesus’ birth to Isaiah 7:14, emphasizing that the virgin birth fulfills Old Testament prophecy. The child will be called Immanuel, meaning “God with us”, highlighting the profound theological truth that God is entering human history to dwell among His people. This underscores Matthew’s theme of Jesus as the fulfillment of God’s promises.

Verses 24–25 — Joseph responds with immediate obedience, taking Mary as his wife despite the social and personal challenges. By naming the child Jesus, he affirms God’s instruction and participates in the divine plan. Matthew notes that Joseph did not have marital relations with Mary until after Jesus’ birth, emphasizing Jesus’ divine conception while maintaining the integrity of Joseph and Mary’s marital relationship.

### **Joshua 1:6-9**

Verses 6–7 — God commissions Joshua as Moses’ successor, reminding him that leading Israel will require courage and strength. The repetition of “Be strong and courageous” emphasizes that Joshua will face challenges, including battles and the responsibility of guiding a nation. Obedience to God’s law is essential. Success is tied not to human ability but to faithful adherence to God’s Word. “Do not turn from it to the right or left” signals the need for careful, consistent obedience.

Verse 8 — God instructs Joshua to meditate on Scripture “day and night,” highlighting the importance of internalizing God’s law. Meditation is not merely reading—it’s reflection, application, and letting God’s Word shape thought, action, and decision-making. This verse links spiritual discipline with practical leadership, showing that God’s guidance comes through His Word.

Verse 9 — The final encouragement assures Joshua of God’s continual presence: “The Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Courage and strength are not self-generated but rooted in the knowledge that God is with His people. The promise applies both to Joshua’s immediate task and to believers today: God’s presence brings confidence in facing unknown challenges.