

Happy Father's Day!

Matthew 1:18 ESV (Pg. 471) Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. **19** And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. **20** But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. **21** She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." **22** All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: **23** "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). **24** When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, **25** but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.

- I. Happy Father's Day men! We are proud of you! Good job! Words can't express how vital you are to the health and survival of our families. Where you are present and engaged, wives and children flourish! Where you are absent and aloof, they suffer. Contrary to what Hollywood says, you're not a buffoon, you're a rock! No matter how you're painted by a secular world, you're not a punchline, you're a warrior. You're not an accessory to the family, you are its load-bearing wall!
 - A. A dad's job is tough! A dad has to provide equal parts strength and tenderness in the home. He has to valiantly stand up to any threats against the family: spiritually, emotionally, physically, financially. You have to teach your sons how to be men, and your daughters how to be treated by other men in her life.
 - B. Dad needs to be a no-nonsense disciplinarian, as well as a fountain of laughter and good times. He's the one the kids don't want to face when they cross the line, and at the same time the one that can always be counted on for a wrestling match, a dance, a tickle fight or an awkward game of "pull my finger".
 1. Few understand the insecurities that haunt us, the desires that sometimes go unexpressed or even unfulfilled. We all want to guide our children well, and see them succeed, but often shudder, feeling ill-prepared to give them what they need to comet on top.
 2. But today, even though every dad's past year has had exhilarating successes and crushing defeats, please know that we are "pro-dad"! There won't be any "Cat's in the Cradle" messages this morning. We're behind you! We're praying for you! Whatever it takes, we believe in you!
- II. Have you ever thought about the fact that when Christ came to earth to save us, he would need a dad? Obviously God was Jesus' father, but if he were to take on flesh, become fully human and dwell among us, he would need an earthly dad! This was always a part of God's eternal plan, not just a coincidence or fluke.
 - A. **Isaiah 46:9b ESV** I am God, and there is none like me, **10 declaring the end from the beginning** and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and **I will accomplish all my purpose...**'
 1. This means that God didn't have tryouts, or hope someone would be available to perform this important task. On the contrary, this means he

- created and appointed Joseph for this express purpose of fathering **himself** during the incarnation! In other words, Jesus picked his own father.
2. According to our text this morning, that high honor fell to a blue-collar carpenter named Joseph from a little town in northern Israel called Nazareth. He wasn't a King, a priest or a rich man. But God said, "He's the one!"
 - a) The same God that handpicked Joseph to be Christ's earthly father also handpicked **you** to be your kid's dad! God is sovereign. Your kids aren't yours by cosmic accident. God planned them and then put them under **your** care. No one else is uniquely equipped or called to raise them.
 - b) This is why broken families are so tragic! Married dads, please stay put! No matter what the challenges! Divorced dads, don't unplug from raising your kids. God picked you to raise them, provide for them, and protect them... he'll never fire or replace you, and he will always help you!
- B. So how overwhelmed would you have been to discover that you were God's choice to be a father to Jesus? How do you think Joseph felt? I want to look at some of the qualities that God might have placed in Joseph, and see if we can learn from his example, and trust that God can do the same in us as fathers.
- III. If you are looking at scripture, you are going to find very little information about Joseph. His name only shows up 14 times in the New Testament: twice in genealogies, three times in past-tense references to Jesus' family. The last 9 are found in the accounts of Jesus birth and childhood in Matthew and Luke.
 - A. By contrast, Mary is mentioned multiple times throughout the life of Christ. She was even present at the cross during the crucifixion. Everyone knows about Mary. Songs are written about her and sung at Christmas! Not so for Joseph. This shows us something about the kind of man Joseph was. He was faithful, even when **Serving in Humble Obscurity**, without accolades or spotlights.
 1. The Bible is clear that the husband and father is the divinely ordained head of the house, but that doesn't mean he is authorized to huff and puff, demanding his way and expecting to be honored, feared and revered.
 - a) **Luke 22:25 ESV** And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and **those in authority** over them are called benefactors. **26 But not so with you.** Rather, let the greatest among you **become as the youngest**, and the leader **as one who serves.**
 - b) This is an important quality for dads. There is no place better suited to demonstrate genuine servant leadership than in fatherhood.
 2. An insecure dad will waste years pleading for his rights, and leveraging his contributions (his hard work, etc.) for the families welfare to demand respect from his wife and children. But a godly man will command respect (not demand it) by his quiet and self-sacrificing service for his family.
 3. If you feel like you're serving in obscurity, like you are leading your family without a lot of promise of reward or recognition, let me encourage you to be faithful. Serve your family as unto the Lord, laying down your life. One day soon your reward will be great! You will hear your father say, **Matthew 25:21 ESV** 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

- B. Another thing we see in the life of Joseph is that he was **A Just Man**. This is the Bible's description of him after he finds out that his young bride, whom he has probably been engaged to for years at this point, is pregnant. This was a major outrage in ancient Israel, and the penalty for it was severe.
1. **Deuteronomy 22:20 ESV** But if the thing is true, that evidence of virginity was not found in the young woman, **21** then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done an outrageous thing in Israel by whoring in her father's house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.
 2. Joseph could have rounded her up, dragged her to the authorities, and had her executed for making a fool out of him, but that was not his impulse.
 - a) *“Joseph, being a **just man** and **unwilling to put her to shame**, resolved to divorce her quietly.”*
 - b) Not only would he let her keep her life, but would not even take any steps to rid her of her dignity; giving mercy when she seemed to deserve wrath.
 3. To be just means to behave according to what is morally right and fair. Yes, Joseph was devastated and heart-broken. But even when he didn't know the real story behind Mary's pregnancy, he denied his own justifiable instincts to bring the hammer down, and chose to extend mercy to her instead.
 - a) I know we **must** discipline our kids; so showing mercy doesn't mean ignoring their sinful behavior (in fact the Bible says that if we don't discipline our kids, we hate them!). Godly discipline is in fact a mercy because it teaches our kids how to live rightly and please God.
 - b) But when you discipline your kids, do you launch a “scorched earth” campaign, do you shame them, or do you discipline them in a way that helps them know that you love them and want the best for them? Do they feel like they can make mistakes without losing the steadfast anchor of your love for them; not because you say so, but by demonstration?
 4. We can only respond to our kids this way if we remember that we too are sinners, prone to vile behavior, and that we constantly need mercy. If we are swift with our justice in the home, but loose with our own morals, I promise you that the hypocrisy of that will not be lost on our kids!
 5. Can I suggest you have an honest, third party conversation with your wife and kids about your discipline style? Don't do it in the heat of the moment, but they may see some things clearly to which you are currently blind.
- C. The next thing I want to observe from Joseph's life is that he was **Spiritually Sensitive**. Just as he was poised to put his fiancé away for her apparent adultery, we read that *“an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’”*
1. Can you even imagine how different this story would had been if Joseph didn't hear the voice of the Spirit? If he had been too angry and self-absorbed about Mary? What if he had been so depressed and overwhelmed that he just vegged out in front of the TV, or sunk to the bottom of the bottle?

2. But God chose him because he was a man that **could** hear his voice. His heart was tightly tuned to what the Lord was saying.
 - a) When he had a dream of angels, he didn't blame it on silly superstitions or last night's pizza. He was assured that he had heard God's will and must act accordingly.
 - b) But his assurance that he had heard God's voice wasn't from a sappy, sentimental pseudo-spiritualism, but rather that he recognized that what he heard lined up with what was written in the scriptures: *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).*
 3. Our kids need spiritually sensitive dads who both pray and listen, whose hearts are captivated by God's Word. We can never figure out how to raise our children simply by our own instincts, or even the example of the best of parents (as helpful as that is). What we need more than anything is the guiding voice of God's Spirit and the foundation of the written word of God.
 - a) **Matthew 4:4 ESV** "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." John 10 says that all of Jesus' sheep hear his voice. If you are his follower, that means you! But it doesn't start with mystical whispers on the breeze, but with full reverence for the written word of God, giving your total attention to it.
 - b) Don't expect that your kids will ever feast on God and his word unless you're sitting right next to them at the table, fork and knife in hand. Your job is not just to correct, but to demonstrate; not to demand, but to display. Treasure Christ and your kids will be more likely to do the same.
- D. This brings us to the next thing about Joseph. He wasn't just **sensitive** to God's voice, he was **Obedient to God's Voice**. *"When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him..."* As dads, we are often stereotypically tasked with teaching our kids the fundamentals of sports. One of those fundamentals is that success is always in the follow-through. No where does this apply more than in the realm of our spiritual lives.
1. It doesn't help to demand morality from our children. It won't help them if we just tell about the value of Church, or the Bible. If we are going to influence them, and see them rooted, they must see that those things have been embraced by us, and that they are progressively transforming our lives.
 - a) Your love and commitment to Christ will not transfer by osmosis! But when your kids see you obey Christ as Lord in the littlest of things, when they see you submit to spiritual authority, then they are more likely to hear you when you are encouraging them to follow Christ.
 - b) But don't think you can tell them not to lie, only to have them see you lie to cops, your boss, their teachers, your friends and think they'll give you a pass or simply not notice. You couldn't be more wrong! Don't think you can prioritize every extracurricular and leisure activity, only participating in the life of the body once or twice a month and think that you're raising kids who will somehow embrace the Kingdom of God because you say

it's important! **Galatians 6:7 ESV** Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.

2. Joseph was obedient. When he knew what to do, he didn't delay in doing it. Can you and I say the same? He knew that mere lip service wouldn't work if he were to please God, and raise Jesus the way he was supposed to.
 - a) Some of you might think you're doing pretty good because you have Christian music playing in your car, and you say grace at dinner, but God is calling us to to genuine, sacrificial obedience in every area - time, finances, entertainment, relationships, our marriages and our parenting.
 - b) **1 Samuel 15:22b ESV** "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in **obeying** the voice of the Lord? Behold, **to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. 23a** For rebellion is as the sin of divination (witchcraft), and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry (making yourself and your desires God)."
- IV. Willing to serve in humble obscurity, justly, sensitive to God's voice and obedient may seem like a tall order to you! You may be discouraged by all the times you've failed to be the kind of dad the job requires. Maybe you heard things this morning that make you feel like you can never do what is needed as a godly dad.
 - A. Be encouraged! God didn't chose Joseph because he was some spiritual rock star - and he didn't chose you or I for that reason either! Joseph had decided that he would pursue the character traits we saw this morning long before he needed them. He did so through repentance and supplication.
 1. We talk about repentance a lot around here. It is not a shameful word. It simply means that when we realize that we are pursuing something that is destructive, that we turn back to the light of Jesus.
 - a) No one can be the dad they need to be without a lot of free flowing repentance. We repent to our wives and our children. Some of us are raised to think that to tell our children we're sorry is a sign of weakness. You couldn't be more wrong! It communicates strength in your commitment to them and their happiness and eternal welfare.
 - b) But mostly we repent to God when we find ourselves away from his best for us. While this may include genuine sorrow, it is not about graveling or vow-making. It's about returning to the grace we desperately need.
 2. Supplication means "the action of asking or begging for something earnestly or humbly". God loves to give what is needed to his children (don't you?).**James 1:5 NLT** If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.
 - a) You cannot serve in obscurity, or lead justly, or clearly hear, or willingly obey without asking for God's help. These things are absolutely contrary to our nature. We'll never do it without God's help.
 - b) But if we humble our pride, and earnestly desire that God help us, he will. If we ask him he will supply what is needed! Because no matter what we are trying to be, He is absolutely the perfect Father! He lavishes on his kids what they need, when they need it, and never denies them what is in their best interests.