

## Joseph



*This is how Jesus Christ was born. A young woman named Mary was engaged to Joseph from King David's family. But before they were married, she learned that she was going to have a baby by God's Holy Spirit. Joseph was a good man and did not want to embarrass Mary in front of everyone. So he decided to quietly call off the wedding. While Joseph was thinking about this, an angel from the Lord came to him in a dream. The angel said, "Joseph, the baby that Mary will have is from the Holy Spirit. Go ahead and marry her. Then after her baby is born, name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." So the Lord's promise came true, just as the prophet had said, "A virgin will have a baby boy, and he will be called Immanuel," which means "God is with us."*

*After Joseph woke up, he and Mary were soon married, just as the Lord's angel had told him to do. But they did not sleep together before her baby was born. Then Joseph named him Jesus.*

Matthew 1: 18-25

Joseph was engaged to Mary. According to the customs of the day, engagement was a serious commitment that was just as important as marriage. If something happened to the intended husband during the engagement, the woman would legally have been considered a widow.

When Joseph found out that Mary was expecting a child, he sought to handle the matter in a quiet way. Joseph, "*being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame*", did not want to hurt Mary but wanted to take appropriate action. That night God spoke to Joseph in his dreams and assured him this was God's only

begotten son. Joseph was entrusted with caring for the mother and child. Joseph married Mary and took care of the child as his own.

### **The Background**

The Gospels indicate that Joseph was a humble, kindly, considerate and generous person. As a conscientious father he would have passed on the carpenter's trade to Jesus. Most importantly, Joseph demonstrated what it meant to be a father:

- Joseph was the obedient servant of the Lord who followed God's instruction to care for the mother and child, as revealed in a dream.
- Joseph protected his family and took them to Egypt to protect the child from a violent and wicked king.
- Joseph worshiped the Lord and followed God's purposes for his life. Joseph took Jesus to the temple for dedication.
- Joseph cared for Jesus. He moved the family to Nazareth when they returned from Egypt so they would be safe from threats from Jerusalem.

### **Reflections**

Life is often a special trust and a test at the same time. Joseph was given the ministry of caring for the Christ child. Joseph was a caring and responsible father. Proverbs state that the worst thing in all creation is a father who does not care and provide for his children. The inverse would indicate that the "greatest thing in all creation" is a loving and responsible father.

Jesus knew two loving fathers. Perhaps Jesus' love and respect for Joseph was reflected in his references to "God, the Father." In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus refers to God as "Abba" or "Daddy," a term of endearment.

Joseph's loving care for his family was clearly influenced by his faith. Joseph was active in the faith life of the family. He took his child to the temple for dedication, offered sacrifices, and participated in religious celebrations in Jerusalem.

Some parents just drop their children off at church saying, "It will be good for them." These parents are fed at local restaurants while their children are nurtured by the word of God. These parents are hypocrites. "Hypocrite" is a word from Greek drama which means "two faced." A hypocrite wears a false mask. Their lives state, "do as I say and not as I do." Their children have to overcome a significant handicap.

There is nothing greater than a family that worships and follows God together. Joseph was the type of parent who made all the difference in the world. Joseph was open to hearing and following the word of God. Joseph's faith saved the family in a time of crisis. Joseph's faith helped bring salvation to the world.

We are all given special responsibilities in our lives. Sometimes it is the faithful caring of our children and families. Other times we are called to care for others. With God's help we respond appropriately to these tasks and follow the model set for us by the Holy First Family.

Like Joseph, Jesus had a special place in his heart for children. One day when the disciples denied some children access; Jesus rebuked the disciples and said "Let the children come unto me." Another time he warned that it would be better to weigh down with a heavy stone and cast into the sea than to harm one of God's children.

The name "Joseph" means, "may God add children." Let us remember this dedicated servant of the Lord every time we help a child. One of the greatest purposes of our lives is to care for all God's children. Caring includes sharing the love of God.

Jaroslav Pelikan (renown Biblical scholar) tells of hearing his eight-year-old daughter sing "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so," and reflecting on how the lyrics of the song did not really fit the child's experience. "She had not read the Bible. She knew that Jesus loved her because her mother, her

father, her Sunday-school teacher, her pastor, and others in the Christian community had told her so. Only later would she come into contact with the Bible. "

We have an obligation to care for all the children of God. Care takes place in the home, at church, Sunday school, Vacation Bible School, schools, community centers, sports, recreational activities, after school programs, medical facilities, social ministries, foster care, orphanages, homeless shelters, world hunger programs, missions, and hundreds of other ministries.

May God enable us to share his love and care with all children, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven.

### **Strength Finders talent: Responsibility**

<https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/252320/responsibility-theme.aspx>

Where would be in the world if we did not have these dedicated people with the gift of "responsibility". They are honest and keep their word. They keep commitments because they have honor. Joseph was a living example of responsibility.

Joseph did the right thing when God revealed the truth about Jesus. Joseph also exercised this talent when he protected the family and took them to Egypt. King Herod was corrupt in body and spirit. He executed anyone he saw as a threat (even his two sons who he personally drowned). Herod heard of a royal savior from the Magi and commanded all male infants of a certain age to be killed. Herod had no responsibility to himself, family, or God. He died a broken man.

Responsibility is from the "executing" domain. That means more than "feeling" responsible. It means doing something about it.

### **Enneagram connections: Six**

Sixes are very intelligent and always alert. They protect themselves and others. They are particularly loyal to family, faith, and community.

Sixes can be quick to doubt. We are told that he was going to break off relationship with Mary in a gentle way when he heard she was pregnant. He doubted Mary. Fortunately, Sixes have respect for authority. Joseph listened to God's messenger and became Mary's protector.

Joseph must have been a very healthy six because he overcame his doubts and fears to do the right thing. Think about it. Joseph and family were being hunted down by a mad king and his army.

Mark Twain said, "history does not repeat itself; but it rhymes". I find it fascinating that a man name Joseph made a powerful difference by "protecting and caring" for his family twice in the Bible. First there was Joseph and his coat of many colors. He forgave and protected his family who had betrayed him. He also cared for and protected all the people of Egypt during a famine. This Joseph changed all the world that he knew. He had listened to God and then did something about it.

Mary's faithful husband had understanding in his heart when married Mary. He protected his family by taking them to Egypt. Joseph of Nazareth's actions changed the world. He listened to God and then did something about it.

<https://cpenneagram.com/enneagram-type-six>

### **Joseph's Song**

*How could it be? This baby in my arms. Sleeping now so peacefully.*

*The Son of God the angel said, how could it be?*

*Lord, I know he's not my own. Not of my flesh, not of my bones  
Still Father let this baby be, the son of my love*

*Father show me where I fit into. This plan of yours  
How can a man be father to the Son of God?  
Lord, for all my life I've been a simple carpenter.  
How can I raise a king? How can I raise a king?*

*He looks so small. His face and hands so fair.  
And when he cries the sun just seems to disappear.  
But when he laughs. It shines again. How could it be?*

*Father show me where I fit into, This plan of yours  
How can a man be father to the Son of God?  
Lord, for all my life I've been a simple carpenter  
How can I raise a king? How can I raise a king?*

*How could it be? This baby in my arms. Sleeping now so  
peacefully*

*The Son of God the angel said, How could it be?*

*Song by Michael Card, 1995*

\* Darrell Jodock, *The Church's Bible: Its Contemporary Authority*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, 74.

