

The Forgotten Man In The Christmas Story

Introduction:

1. When we think about the Christmas story, our minds immediately go to Jesus, to the Babe in the manger. Also, we think of Mary, and we may even think of old, nasty King Herod. Our minds may think of the proverbial “three wise men” or the shepherds in the field.
2. But usually, we don’t give a lot of thought to Joseph, the man who would be the earthly step-father of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.
3. One reason for this is probably because there is so little recorded about Joseph in the Bible. There are not many facts recorded about Joseph in the gospels.
 - We see him before Jesus is born.
 - He is right there when Jesus is born (goes to Bethlehem).
 - He flees into Egypt and back into Galilee.
4. This is pretty much it. He is referred to when Jesus is left at the temple when Jesus was 12 years old. After that, he is never heard from again.
5. But I believe Joseph should be talked about more. He was quite a man. Joseph is an incredible example of what a godly man ought to be. Let’s spend some time this morning studying this man and giving him some of the attention he deserves. It will hopefully inspire all of us in our walk with God.

First, Joseph was an extremely obedient man. Luke 2:21-24

1. Can you imagine God looking down from heaven and choosing a man to raise His Son? God had to have a man who would be obedient, one who wouldn’t rebel and do things his way. God needed a man willing to do things God’s way.
2. Of course, we know about Joseph’s obedience **before** Christ was born. His espoused bride turns up pregnant, but rather than putting her away (Deuteronomy 22:23-24), he listened to the angel that appeared to him, which gave instructions that Joseph carried out to the letter.
3. But **after** Jesus was born, we also see this spirit of obedience in Joseph. Joseph takes Mary and Jesus to the temple of God in Jerusalem. Why did he do this? This is what God’s Word instructed parents to do at that time. Joseph could have thought, “Why go all the way over there; He is the Son of God, we get a free pass on all that stuff.” But he didn’t do this.
4. Look in our text and notice the exact obedience to God’s Word.
 - The name of the baby – vs. 21
 - The circumcising of the baby – vs. 21
 - Presenting him to the Lord – vs. 22-23
 - The proper sacrifices according to God’s law – vs. 24
5. It was extremely important that everything about the life of Jesus comply with God’s law. Why? So that nobody could rightfully accuse Christ of being a sinner. Christ had to fulfill the righteousness of the law to the letter. The character and obedience of Joseph had profound theological ramifications.

6. Obviously, when Christ was a baby, he couldn't make those righteous decisions concerning Himself. God had to have a man He could trust completely with the life of His Son. What an example Joseph is of a man that was obedient to God's commands and that God could trust, even with the life of His own Son.

Second, Joseph was a very humble man. Matthew 1:18-19

1. When Mary told Joseph she was pregnant, Joseph had every right to feel disgraced. He knew the baby was not his own. He not only had the legal right to divorce her, he could have had her stoned under the law in those days. At the least, he could have humiliated her publicly. Deuteronomy 22:23-24
2. He didn't know the end of the story. He had no clue what had happened. It had to disturb him greatly, yet he handled this situation with total grace and humility.
3. Although his initial reaction was to break the engagement (which is what a righteous man would do), he treated Mary with extreme kindness. He did not want to embarrass her further, so he acted quietly.
4. He tempered justice with mercy. His attitude was "I will do the right thing. I will handle the situation with discretion and with grace." This takes great humility when you feel you are in the right, and somebody else has sinned and done you very wrong.
5. Joseph had been hurt deeply, yet he acted with great humility. Do we act with humility when others do us wrong or hurt us? What an example Joseph is.

Third, Joseph was a tender-hearted man. Matthew 1:20-24

1. I like where it says that he thought on these things. Even though he knew the facts (they were espoused, and she was pregnant), he still was troubled by it. It seems that he knew something didn't add up, and he sat there carefully pondering the situation.
2. This shows such a tender-heartedness. Most men would have blown their stack, disgraced her publicly, and moved on without any more thought.
3. A wise and tender-hearted man carefully thinks through the decisions and circumstances of life. He doesn't just make rash judgments. Proverbs 18:13 warns, "*He that answers a matter before he hears it, it is a folly and shame unto him.*"
4. I get the idea from this text that Joseph was a man that truly wanted more information and enlightenment. When the angel came and brought him just that, he was very open to this, demonstrating that he had a teachable spirit.
5. He was willing to say, "I was wrong about this. I didn't have all the information. I jumped to conclusions. I misjudged Mary."
6. It takes a person with a very tender heart and a teachable spirit to admit when he or she is wrong.

Fourth, Joseph was a selfless man. Matthew 1:24-25

1. There is absolutely no concern for his reputation or his personal desires. Immediately, he does what he is instructed to do. He formally and publicly takes her to be his wife, but in the privacy of their home, he refuses to touch her sexually until after Jesus is born.

2. Because of his position as being Jesus' earthly parent, he has to flee into Egypt, then go back into Galilee. Yet you never read of a complaint or any questioning of any kind. He simply obeys, thinking of the safety and security of Mary and Jesus first.
3. I believe Joseph knew that because of this unique position, he would not live a long life. I think this is clear from the prophecy of Simeon in Luke 2:33-35. He is not mentioned as being around when Jesus began His public ministry.
 - Almost everybody agrees that he died before Jesus revealed Himself to the world. The last mention of him is when Jesus was 12 and was left at the temple in Jerusalem. Mary calls Joseph Jesus' father, and Jesus corrects her and establishes who His true Father is. This is the last we hear of Joseph.
4. When Jesus began his public ministry for His heavenly Father's business, the earthly father would have to fade away, so as not to distract from this most crucial and important moment in history.
5. Isn't it fitting that we see no record of his death, how he died, where he was buried, etc. He quietly fades away, and Christ takes center stage. I do not believe that this bothered Joseph one bit. He was a selfless man that simply desired to obey His God and do the right thing.

In Conclusion:

1. What a testimony Joseph displayed; what a man of integrity and dignity.
2. You hear so much about Mary, but it was a package deal. It seems reasonable to believe that if Joseph was not a man that God could trust, Mary would not have been chosen to carry the Son of God, since she was espoused to him.
3. Hopefully, this forgotten man's actions have challenged you in your own heart and life. Joseph was obedient, humble, tender-hearted, and selfless. David was said to be a man after God's own heart. I think the same could be said of Joseph.
4. To be the father of God's own Son while on earth is quite a lot to ask of a man, but Joseph did so with class and character.