

Series – Jesus for My Family

#6 The Forgotten Father

Matthew; 2 Timothy 3;

Intro: One of my daily devotions this week was from 2 Timothy, chapter 3. The title of this part of the bible says, 'Godlessness in the Last Days.' [don't put these verses on screen] Listen to this: ***"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.***

6They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, 7always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. 8Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. 9But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone."

At the end of that section in my bible, I just wrote **'Yikes!'** It described very accurately the worldly mindset of a lot of people in our culture. And in the end Paul is telling young Timothy, don't be like these men.

In the bible we find stories of some great men and some great fathers, but not all great men were great fathers. God said David was a man after God's own heart, but the bible shows that his family was a trainwreck. Eli was a priest, but his kids were out of control.

Today is the 6th message in our series, ***Jesus for My Family*** and I want to use the occasion of Father's Day to talk about us men. Father's Day is a holiday that causes a variety of emotions for people. Some have had great fathers and will celebrate

the day with a joyful celebration. Others may have lost their dads, so the day brings a certain amount of sorrow. Or perhaps people have had bad or absent fathers, and they don't find much to celebrate.

God created fatherhood, modeled after himself. Yet we live in a broken world, corrupt and marred by sin. None of us have had perfect fathers on this earth, but Jesus taught us to pray, *'Our father who art in heaven.'* We all have a perfect heavenly father.

Here are some examples of some flawed, but faithful fathers in the Bible.

1. Abraham, the Father of Faith

God called Abraham to leave his homeland and follow the Lord into a new, unknown land, and Abraham obeyed. He left comfort and safety, and he trusted God's promises. Abraham's faith in God made him the "father of many nations" (Genesis 17:4).

Abraham didn't pass down wealth or a stable area of land. His legacy was faith. "For I have chosen him, so that he will command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just" (Genesis 18:19).

Good fathers realize the greatest thing we can pass on is faith. This builds a powerful spiritual legacy for the following generations.

2. Job, Who Prayed for His Children

God introduces Job as a righteous man, and part of his model includes a father who would rise early in the morning to offer burnt offerings as intercession for them, saying, "It may be that my children have sinned and cursed God in their hearts" (Job 1:5). Job didn't assume his kids believed, even seeing their outward actions. Job took a priestly role over his household.

Godly fathers don't only provide material things; they understand the most important role remains to intercede for their family.

3. Noah, Righteous in His Generation

The bible says, ***“Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked faithfully with God”*** (Genesis 6:9).

Because of this, God chose Noah to build an ark, to save the animals and his family from the coming judgment, a great flood.

Someone has written: All I Need to Know, I Learned from Noah's Ark:

1. Don't miss the boat.
2. Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the Ark.
3. Stay fit. When you're 600 years old, God may ask you to do something big.
4. Don't listen to critics. Just get on with the job that needs to be done.
5. Build your future on high ground.
6. Speed isn't everything. The snails were on board with the cheetahs.
7. Remember the Ark was built by amateurs, the Titanic by professionals.

In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy and Linus stare out the window, watching it rain. Lucy says, 'Boy! Look at it pour. What if it floods the whole world?'

Linus says, 'It won't. In Gen. 9, God promised Noah that would never happen again. The sign of that promise is the rainbow.'

Lucy, turning back to the window with a big smile, says, 'You've taken a great load off my mind.' Linus, **"Sound theology has a way of doing that."**

4. Jacob, Who Left His Children with a Blessing

Jacob was a flawed man with a complicated past. However, God remained faithful to his covenant with Abraham and used Jacob. God gave him a new name, Israel, and brought a nation out of him. His story shows us that, even if a man has flaws, a father can leave a blessing.

Days before his death, Jacob gathered his sons to speak a prophetic word over each one. ***“Then Jacob called for his sons and said: ‘Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come’”*** (Genesis 49:1). These blessings weren't a nice goodbye but Spirit-led revelations about the future of the twelve tribes of Israel.

5. Zechariah, Who Gave the Right Name

Zechariah gave his son the name given by God. In the Jewish culture of that day, sons would carry a family name. God called Zechariah to break with tradition, to name the child “John.” Zechariah prophesied regarding John the Baptiste’s future role as the forerunner of the Messiah (Luke 1:76).

Zechariah served as a priest, but John took a different path, preparing the way for Jesus as prophet. As fathers, we follow this example by setting aside our own expectations and seek God’s heart for our kids.

The last father I want to mention is the subject of today’s message. I’m talking about Joseph, Jesus’ earthly father. Joseph was placed in a very difficult situation when he was asked by God to father a son that was not his own flesh and blood. Joseph is often overlooked in teaching and preaching on fathers, that is why I’m calling this message, **The Forgotten Father.**

Turn with me to Matthew 1:18-25

“This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20But after he had considered 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 home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

22All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

23“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

24When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.”

Let's PRAY

Joseph is not the only Joseph or even the most famous Joe in the bible. That would probably be Joseph of the Coat of many colors fame, who was sold by his brothers to Egypt, grew up in Potiphar's house, and became #2 in Egypt.

Joseph gets left out of many Christmases and Father's day messages. It's kind of like men at a wedding. The newspaper will tell you all about dresses and the wedding gown the ladies wear. It never tells you how the men were dressed.

If you are ever asked to be in a Christmas play and are asked to play the part of Joseph - don't take that as a compliment. No one will ever win Best Actor or supporting actor, because Joseph doesn't say a word in Scripture.

- Mary has a conversation with Gabriel and sings a praiseful solo.
- Wise men talk to Herod and worship the newborn king.
- Shepherds talk to angels and preach the Good News.
- Joseph is silent. No sound bites. No quotes. No words of wisdom.

We assume he speaks, because we can imagine the conversations he had with Mary, the innkeeper, the shepherds, and wise men.

It was Emerson who said, "What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say." If that is true, what Joseph did spoke so loudly that it wasn't necessary for him to say anything.

He's the strong silent type like so many men in our church. Joseph is a carpenter by trade...he makes things fit together...he's learned to measure twice and cut once...not used to surprises because he always has some kind of blueprint or building plan before proceeding ahead...and in this story he's caught, between what God says and what makes sense. Have you been there? Has there been a time when you questioned God's plans? (Ken?)

So even though Joseph doesn't say anything, there are a lot of things we can say about Joseph.

I. God turned Joseph's life upside-down.

At first sight, there seems to be some confusion, because verse eighteen tells us that he was "betrothed" to Mary, then verse nineteen tells us that he was thinking about "divorcing her" and then in verse twenty she is called "his wife".

Jewish marriage was a three-step process. First, there was the engagement stage. This was the contractual stage between both sets of parents.

The second stage was called the betrothal stage. This would be equivalent to our engagement. It usually lasted about one year, and it was a binding contract that could only be dissolved by divorce. This is where we find Mary and Joseph. During this stage they were married in every way except sexually.

Stage three would be the marriage ceremony itself.

Now Joseph has a real problem on his hands. He has a young teenage fiancée who is pregnant, and he knows it is not his child.

A. He is feeling the tension between law and love.

On the one hand he knew exactly what the law said. The Bible taught that if a young lady was found to be unfaithful before her marriage, that he could make a public disgrace out of her, put her away privately, have her stoned to death.

At this point Joseph was full of doubt. He doubted Mary. He doubted her character, her purity and her virginity. He doubted God, because even though Mary had by now told him that God was the father of the child, he doubts that.

Then he doubted himself, because he did not know what to do.

Several years ago, a young lady wrote Dear Abby and said, "Dear Abby, I've been going with this man for some time now. Just before our wedding, I discovered that he has a wooden leg. Do you think I should break it off?"

Joseph was wondering - should he break off this engagement? ***"And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, planned to send her away quietly."*** (Matt. 1:19) I love this about Joseph, and it gives us a glimpse into his character.

B. He was concerned about how this crisis would affect Mary, not him.

Joseph did something we should always do when we are in the middle of a situation where we don't know what to do; pray and come up with the best God-ordained plan you can.

"But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.' She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matt. 1:20-21)

God intervenes and gives him the whole plan. Matthew then gives the explanation of why God was doing this. ***"Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet."*** (Matt. 1:22)

"Fulfill" is the key word in the Gospel of Matthew, because Matthew is primarily written to the Jews, to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy.

Then we read in verses 24 and 25 these words. ***"And Joseph awoke from his sleep and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus."*** (Matthew 1:24-25)

C. He married Mary and kept her a virgin until after Jesus was born, because he trusted God's promise.

II. Joseph's Character is displayed in the Crisis.

A. Joseph was righteous in His walk

Verse 19 says: ***"And Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly."*** His righteousness caused him to do two things:

1) It caused him to treat Mary very well.

We know that because he desired to put her away privately. Notice that he had already decided, without the angel talking to him, or any sign from heaven, that he wanted to put her away privately. He did not want to disgrace her. He was a righteous man, not only because he treated her well, but...

2) He did not break God's law.

He could have thought, "Everybody's going to think that the baby is mine anyway, so I will just go ahead and have sexual relations with her." But verse 25 says, ***"he took Mary as his wife, but kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus."***

ILLUSTRATION: I read about another Joseph who had a similar experience in his life. His name was Joseph Scriven; and he was born on September 10, 1819 in Ireland. His parents had financial means to send him to Trinity College in Dublin, but he dropped out after one year and joined the army. Due to health problems, he was discharged and went back and finished school. He eventually met and fell in love with a young lady, but on the day before their wedding she was involved in a horrible accident and drowned in a lake.

Joseph was devastated and at the age of 25 traveled to Port Hope, Canada where he became known as the Woodcutter for the poor. He would only work for those who couldn't pay him. He eventually fell in love again...only to have tragedy strike again...his new love died of pneumonia before they married. A short time before his death at age 66 a visiting friend discovered that he was quite a poet. In Port Hope, Ontario, Canada there is a monument with some of the words of one of his poems:

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry...everything to God in prayer!

B. Joseph was selfless in his actions.

You must understand that women were not equals in this culture; and yet his attitude toward Mary is selfless and protective and kind. Look at verses 19-20:

"Not wanting to disgrace her, he desired to put her away quietly."

Joseph was inwardly strong and courageous. God's word for that description is **meek**. (Matt 5:5) Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.

Meekness toward God is that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good without disputing, resisting, or whining and complaining.

Meekness stems from trust in God's goodness and plans.

He was hurt, disappointed, and confused; but Joseph wanted to do the very best for Mary. And before he had a clear word from the Lord, he's already pondering in his mind, "What's the best thing I can do for this person I love?"

Nothing is more revealing about our maturity than the way that we respond to difficult situations. Will we react in self-defense and self-preservation or in love and trust and kindness and forgiveness?

Joseph's love for Mary reflects Paul's definition in 1 Cor. 13: ***"Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast; it is not proud or rude. Love is not self-seeking or easily angered. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but it rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres"***

Can you imagine how Mary must have felt in her heart about Joseph, as this man stuck with her at the most difficult and trying time of her life? Can you imagine the firm foundation that this marriage had because Joseph was willing to believe the best in Mary, and show her dignity and love?

Joseph was righteous in his walk...selfless in his attitude, and...

C. Joseph was sensitive to the Spirit.

I'm amazed at the receptivity of Joseph at this point. It's hard to hear from God when you are angry, emotional, and confused. In fact, it's difficult for us to listen and be sensitive to the Spirit when...

- 1) You've already made your plans.
- 2) You are overly emotional about the problem.
- 3) Risk is involved.
- 4) God's plan doesn't make any sense.

There's no precedent for Joseph when an angel says that his wife is pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

But verse 20 says, ***"And when he had considered this." "Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream saying, "Joseph, Son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For that which she has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a son. And you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."***

You don't have to know everything, to do the next thing God is asking of you.

Joseph was righteous in his walk...selfless in his attitude...sensitive to the spirit

D. Joseph was Complete in his Obedience to God.

There are four times in the Scriptures that we find God interacting with Joseph through a dream, and all four times Joseph responded immediately with complete obedience.

- 1) Joseph took Mary as his wife.
- 2) They fled to Egypt.
- 3) He returned to Israel.
- 4) He went to Nazareth.

Joseph never said a word, but he was no ordinary Joe, because: He was righteous in his walk...selfless in his attitude...sensitive to the spirit...complete in his obedience...and lastly...

1. Joseph Embraced the Role to be the earthly father of God's Son.

The angel informs him that the baby will be a boy, his name is to be "Jesus," and he will become the savior of his own people. The angel then informs him that due to the birth of this special child, God would literally become a man and would be found walking among human beings.

It is one thing to know the truth, to understand the truth, to believe the truth, but altogether more to act upon the truth.

He embraced the angelic instructions and married the woman that he loved and accepted the role of being Jesus' earthly father. The role of a stepfather is one to be admired, especially when it comes to raising someone else's child.

Too often we fail to remember the "Forgotten Father's" of our modern age!!! I want to dedicate this message to all the forgotten fathers...stepfathers, foster fathers, teachers, coaches, uncles, to all those godly men who are righteous in their walk...selfless in their attitude...sensitive to the spirit and have influenced the next generation of boys and girls.

"Never underestimate the influence of a borrowed dad."

Because Jesus willingly accepted his role of Jesus earthly father, we see...

2. Jesus Enjoyed the Daily Life of a Father

One thing that children need is the daily interaction of a father. Dad, do you know how your kids spell love? "TIME!!!"

EX. Dale Ernhardt the driver trying to get his father's approval

EX. Jesus said at 12 years old, He was in his father's house.

a) The Presence of a Father

The greatest need that our kids and teens need from their fathers is his presence. Your child does not need a bigger house, an excessive allowance, a classier car, the most recent phone on the market, your child needs you!!!

b) The Parenting of a Father

The greatest need of kids is that of a father who will parent them, one that will teach them right from wrong, one that we set daily examples for them.

I know some men who think their only job is to work and provide the material needs of their family. That's not God's plan.

c) The Dynamic Leadership of a Father

If not for Joseph stepping into the role of being a step-father, Jesus would not have had the opportunity of having an earthly father. And because of it:

1 – Jesus learned a trade

It was Joseph that had taught Jesus his very own trade of carpentry. One of the greatest things that a father can do is teach his children the responsibility of having a good work ethic.

2 – Jesus was taught God's ways

The bible does not tell us a lot about Joseph, but it does tell us that he took Jesus to the temple when he was eight days old. The bible also tells us that Joseph, and his wife took the boy on a yearly basis to Jerusalem to participate in the yearly feasts. Joseph gave Jesus the necessary religious training.

3 - Jesus was loved by Joseph

Would it not have been a travesty if the very God of this universe had visited this earth and not experienced the love of an earthly father? Joseph stepped up and gave Jesus the fatherly love he needed until He came to the awareness of His heavenly father.

Joseph Loved as a Provider...Joseph Loved as a Protector

When the boy was around two years old Joseph was once again visited by the angel of the Lord and told to take the boy down to Egypt and he obeyed. After the death of Herod, he was again visited by the angel of the Lord and told to take the boy back to his homeland and he gladly and willingly obeyed.

CONCLUSION:

Proverbs 20:6 asks a sobering question... ***“But a faithful man- who can find?”*** A father is to be a guide, guard, and governor. That means he directs, protects, and corrects. He nourishes, cherishes, and admonishes. He’s the prophet, priest, and king of the home under God’s guidance.

"Dad" is an immensely powerful word. T. Berry Brazelton, former chief of child development at Children's Hospital in Boston says: "Of all human relationships, the bond between father and child is one of the most powerful and complex. We may look to our mothers for unconditional love, but children often seek to validate their existence through the approval of their fathers."

When the dad says to the child: "You can do it. You are special. I believe in you. I'm here with you," then the child believes that they can make it in the world.

One of the great temptations of the Christian life is to live as if we have no father in heaven who is concerned about every aspect of our life. The temptation our Lord faced was to believe that he also had been left fatherless.

Joseph could have walked away, and no one would have thought him wrong. Instead, he stayed, loved, led, and raised the Messiah, despite not being his blood father. In this, he revealed the love of God, who adopts us into his own heavenly family (Romans 8:15).

God's plan for Joseph was a lot bigger than Joseph's plan for Joseph. And God’s plan for you is a lot bigger than your plan for you. There are times when God's will is not the easiest thing to do. There are times when God's will is not the most convenient thing to do, but we learn from Joseph that if we trust God, we will see that God's will is always the right and the best thing to do.