



# The Men of Bethlehem

Meetings at the Manger



## The Courage of Christmas

NOVEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup>, 2015

## JOSEPH: THE RELUCTANT FATHER

*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. <sup>19</sup> And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us). <sup>24</sup> When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, <sup>25</sup> but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus.*  
– Matthew 1:18-25 ESV

### Deuteronomy 22:13-21

## WE NEED THE COURAGE TO ACCEPT...

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. – Acts 4:13 ESV*

### 1. SOCIETAL DISDAIN

*Everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. <sup>33</sup> But everyone who denies me here on earth, I will also deny before my Father in heaven. – Matthew 10:32-33 NLT*

*No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also. – 1 John 2:23 ESV*

*And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? ... <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. – Mark 8:36,38 NLT*

## 2. SPIRITUAL ADVENTURE

*...no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit - 1 Corinthians 12:3 ESV*

*...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. – Philippians 2:10-11 ESV*

*Matthew 2:13-15; 19-24*

*Just think—you don't need a thing, you've got it all! All God's gifts are right in front of you as you wait expectantly for our Master Jesus to arrive on the scene for the Finale. And not only that, but God himself is right alongside to keep you steady and on track until things are all wrapped up by Jesus. God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that. – 1 Corinthians 1:7-9 MSG*

*This resurrection life you received from God is not a timid, grave-tending life. It's adventurously expectant, greeting God with a childlike "What's next, Papa?" God's Spirit touches our spirits and confirms who we really are. We know who he is, and we know who we are: Father and children. And we know we are going to get what's coming to us—an unbelievable inheritance! We go through exactly what Christ goes through. If we go through the hard times with him, then we're certainly going to go through the good times with him! – Romans 8:15-17 MSG*

## 3. SALVATION FROM OURSELVES

*There's no such thing as self-rescue, pulling yourself up by your bootstraps. The cost of rescue is beyond our means, beyond our ability to live forever and never see the grave – Psalm 49:7-9 MSG/NLT*

*Self-help is no help at all. Self-sacrifice is the way, my way, to finding yourself, your true self. What kind of deal is it to get everything you want but lose yourself? What could you ever trade your soul for? – Matthew 16:25-26 MSG*

## My Next Steps

- I Will Memorize: [1 John 2:23](#)
- I will live passionately for Jesus no matter the cost!
- I will seek to make Christmas centered on Christ.
- I will surrender my life to Christ as my savior.

# WALK THE TALK

## A Growth Group Guide For Christmas

Read: Matthew 2:13-23

1. How far away from your childhood home do you live? Would you go back tomorrow if you got a chance?
2. How do you view Joseph when you read this story? What character traits seem to be evident from the text? What character flaws does he tend to wrestle with?
3. How was Joseph an extension of the Father God to Jesus?
4. What is so significant about how God used prophecy, dreams, angels, and circumstances to guide Joseph in his care of Jesus?
5. What can we learn about how faith and obedience are seen as critical components of the Christian life from how Joseph responded to the angel of the Lord (also Matthew 1:18-24)?
6. Review this pattern in the Joseph Story: An angel dream, “got up,” “took,” then did something, and then “fulfilled” a prophecy (see Matthew 1:20, 24; 2:13-15; 19-21, 23). Why do you think this pattern is repeated four times? What can we learn from this?
7. How long would it take you to respond in obedience if/when God decided to give you an unexpected challenge or asked you to relocate your whole life? Do you think your faith and obedience are strong enough to be ready when/if it happens?