

LifeGroup Questions
Based On: Matthew 1:18-21
December 13, 2015

Overview

The Christmas season is supposed to be filled with cinnamon, spice, and everything nice. It the time of year that even by secular standards is supposed to be filled with good tidings and joy. Nothing instantaneously occurs on December 1st that erases all the hurts and pains that occurred during the previous 11 months. A lot of us will head into the Christmas season with frustrated hearts and broken relationships.

The very first record of a broken relationship occurs just 18 verses into the New Testament. Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph. Under Jewish law this was binding and required a certificate of divorce for it to be broken. It is referred to as the betrothal period. In Matthew 1:16 and 19 Joseph is referred to as Mary's husband before she officially became his wife as mentioned in Matthew 1:24. This is how serious the betrothal period was to be taken. Imagine Joseph's surprise when he learns that his bride-to-be is pregnant. Matthew recorded that Joseph wanted to divorce Mary quietly so as to not make her go through public disgrace. If Joseph had not listened to God then this would have completely changed the Christmas story.

Matthew 1:20 states that Joseph was considering divorce when an angel visited him in a dream. There is no record of how long Joseph knew of Mary's pregnancy before the angel's visit. During this time Joseph must have felt extremely hurt, betrayed, and humiliated by Mary. Her main requirement during this betrothal period was to remain loyal and in Joseph's mind she couldn't even do the basic.

There are a lot of people who can relate to the hurt that Joseph felt. Hurtful words get said that cannot be taken back. Relationships are broken and then here it is again: Christmas. It is not the words "Merry Christmas" that take away the frustration and brokenness that comes with relationships. The strength and hope for restoring relationships doesn't come from the people that caused the pain, but from the one who has given us life. It is our relationship with Jesus that makes the forgiveness possible. We don't need to be told in a dream to forgive. It is written throughout the New Testament and demonstrated on the cross. In this lesson we are going to go over some ways to restore broken relationships.

Bible Study: Matthew 1:18-21

1. In what ways can the holiday season create additional strain and stress on your relationships with friends and family?
2. Read Matthew 1:18-21. Discuss a time when you dealt with failed expectations in a relationship. How did it make you feel?
3. Joseph can be an example of dealing with law and grace. Under the letter of the law he had the complete right to expose and divorce Mary. Even before the angel told him about the source of the pregnancy Joseph had decided to deal with Mary gracefully. In what ways can acting on emotions in the middle of being hurt cause more damage than good? What steps can you take to prevent yourself from reacting poorly in the middle of feeling hurt?

4. Read Ephesians 4:26-27. How can not offering forgiveness and seeking reconciliation cause the harboring of anger and bitterness? Why is it easier to deal with a hurtful situation sooner rather than letting it carrying on for a long time?
5. Read Ephesians 4:32. Discuss how Jesus' forgiveness for you is a basis for your forgiveness for others.
6. Read Psalms 147:3 and Revelation 21:4. Whether your relationships work out the way you want them to or not, why is it important for you to remain focused on God for healing?
7. Read Matthew 6:14-15. God wants us to offer others forgiveness. What are some practical steps you can take toward offering forgiveness and restoring a broken relationship?
8. What can you do to make sure your Christmas is merry and full of hope and joy?