

December 5

Character: Joseph

Setting: The genealogy of Joseph in the book of Matthew begins at Abraham, runs through the line of David and ends with the birth of Jesus. Before we talk about the birth of Jesus or the other characters in today's story, we need to explain a little about the setting of this story. Orthodox Jewish marriages include three separate steps. The first is an agreement between the parents of both the bride and the groom for the union to take place. The second is a public announcement about the engagement. Unlike our culture, this engagement is binding, and the engaged couple can only break the engagement by a formal divorce. During this one-year timeframe the couple are considered married. However, they do not live together as husband and wife. At the end of this engagement time, there is a marriage ceremony where the couple come together as husband and wife, and begin living together.

Our story today begins during this engagement period – before a marriage ceremony has taken place. It's a story you will probably be familiar with about a young man named Joseph who lived in the town of Galilee, and who was engaged to be married to a young lady named Mary. Listen as we read about Joseph's predicament as recorded in the book of Matthew.

Scripture Matthew 1:18-25 (Read)

Application: As you can see, Joseph was faced with a very difficult decision. In that culture, Joseph could have divorced Mary, or even had her publicly exposed and stoned when he realized she was expecting a baby. But God had another option for Joseph, and that was for him to marry her. We know there had to be consequences for Joseph by accepting God's will and choosing to marry her. He and Mary probably both lost friends, had their reputations soiled, and lost the respect of many people in their community. Yet God revealed to Joseph what His plan was, and he chose to surrender the temporary things of this world and follow God's plan. And now, here we are today... Almost 2000 years later, and we are still reading about the sacrifice and faithfulness of Joseph. Take some time with your family today to discuss the courage it takes to follow Jesus, but also the blessings that are eternal when we say "yes" to God. Look up some verses in the Bible that mention courage and record them in your advent journal.

Prayer: Praise God for calling us to a life of purpose. Thank Him for the way He has created us and chose the good works we would do for Him before we were even born. Ask Him for courage to go boldly

where He asks us to go, and to keep our eyes fixed on eternity, rather than the temporary things of this life.