



“God’s Guidance in Decision Making”

Matthew 1: 18-22 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Observation

The Book (account) of the generation (**lineage**) of Jesus Christ (**Saviour, Messiah**), the Son of David, the Son of Abraham (**the Incarnation, God becoming man**)

- **Isaiah 7:14** - Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel
- **Galatians 3:16** - Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, “And to offsprings,” referring to many, but referring to one, “And to your offspring,” who is Christ.

The The scriptures above referred to us the mission of Jesus Christ here on earth. But, someone by the person of Joseph, being obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit to stay on this mission so God's plan, which is to save the world can be accomplished.

The strength of what we believe is measured by how much we are willing to suffer for those beliefs.

Joseph was a man with strong beliefs.

- He was prepared to do what was right, despite the pain he knew it would cause. But Joseph had another trait: He not only tried to do what was right, he also tried to do it in the right way.
- When Mary told Joseph about her pregnancy, Joseph knew the child was not his.
- His respect for Mary’s character and the explanation she gave him, as well as her attitude toward the expected child, must have made it hard to think his bride had done something wrong. Still, someone else was the child’s father - and it was mind - boggling to accept that the “someone else” was God.

Historical Background.

Joseph decided he had to break the engagement, but he was determined to do it in a way that would not cause public shame to Mary. **He intended to act with justice and love.**

At this point, God sent a messenger to Joseph to confirm Mary's story and open another way of obedience for Joseph -to take Mary as his wife. Joseph obeyed God, married Mary, and honoured her virginity until the baby was born.

Jewish marriage involved three basic steps:

1. **First, the two families agreed to the union.**
2. **Second, a public announcement was made.** At this point, the couple was "engaged." This was similar to engagement today except that their relationship could be broken only through death or divorce (even though sexual relations were not yet permitted).
3. **Third, the couple was married and began living together.** Because Mary and Joseph were engaged, Mary's apparent unfaithfulness carried a severe social stigma. According to Jewish civil law, Joseph had a right to divorce her, and the Jewish authorities could have had her stoned to death.

Why is the Virgin Birth important to the Christian faith?

Jesus Christ, God's Son, had to be free from the sinful nature passed on to all other human beings by Adam. Because Jesus was born of a woman, he was a human being; but as the Son of God, Jesus was born without any trace of human sin. Jesus is both fully human and fully divine.

Application

Joseph was faced with a difficult choice after discovering that Mary was pregnant.

- Perhaps Joseph thought he had only **two options: divorce Mary quietly or have her stoned.**
- But God provided a **third option "marry her"** (1:20-23). In view of the circumstances, this had not occurred to Joseph.
- But God often shows us that there are more options available than we think. Although Joseph seemed to be doing the right thing by breaking the engagement, only God's guidance helped him make the best decision. But that did not make it an easy decision.
- Consenting to marry Mary surely cast doubt on his own innocence regarding the pregnancy, as well as leaving them both with a social stigma they would carry for the rest of their lives. Yet Joseph chose to obey the angel's command - ***Matthew 1:24 - When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife.***
- **When our decisions affect the lives of others, we must always seek God's wisdom and then be willing to follow through no matter how difficult it may be.**
 - If your decision of divorcing your spouse will affect your children, then seek God's wisdom
 - If your decision of leaving your family, work, church, ministry, leadership position will affect others, then seek God's wisdom and guidance

- Joseph knew Jesus was someone special from the moment he heard the angel's words. His strong belief in that fact and his willingness to follow God's leading empowered him to be Jesus' chosen earthly father.

Someone said that you never know how a baby will turn out, do you? This one turned out to be the Savior of the world. But not everyone knows that, understands it, or believes it. As we prepare our hearts for Christmas, let's remind ourselves once again who Jesus is.

Jesus Consulted His Father Before Making a Decision

Jesus needed to make an important decision in today's gospel, about which of the disciples he should choose to become his Apostles:

1. Inability to stay **awake in prayer**
2. The **weakness of their faith** in Jesus
3. Inability to be **present at Jesus's death** on the cross
4. Limited of understanding Jesus' teaching
5. Along with the others, abandoned Jesus at his arrest
6. Refused to believe the others' claims to have seen Christ and demanded proof
7. Struggled with a pessimistic outlook.

Matthew 26:39 - *"He went on a little farther and bowed with his face to the ground, praying, 'My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine'"*