

# MATTHEW 1:18-25

13 DECEMBER 2020

ICE BREAKER: Describe one of your favorite things about Christmas.

## GROUP QUESTIONS:

(Read verses 18-19) As we meet Joseph and Mary, they are **preparing for their future** together, of a happy engagement followed by a faithful marriage. Like most young couples awaiting marriage, they must have talked about their future together, their hopes, dreams, the number of children they wanted, etc.

But when God came to them, **His future plan** for them not only replaced their future plans, but also **endangered** them from having any future together at all.

1. How does **following the Lord** change your plans and goals, even dreams?

(Read verses 18-19) God introduced an **extraordinary future for Joseph and Mary**—becoming parents of Jesus the Messiah. But such a future would come **at great cost** and **certain embarrassment**.

Mary would be subjected to scandal, *“to public disgrace.”* She most certainly would face vicious rumors of infidelity, disastrous for a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish girl. Joseph would face the questioning and laughter of marrying someone claiming to be impregnated by God. His reputation as *“a righteous man”* would be lost in laughter and shame. When God wants to do something amazing in our lives, often it will be at **the cost of our reputation or good name**.

2. How has **obeying the Lord** or one of His commands ever come at a cost in **what people say about you**?

(Read Luke 1:26-30, 38) The angel Gabriel announced to Mary she would become the mother of the Messiah Jesus. Can you imagine Mary trying to explain this to Joseph? How would he react to this fantastic story of an angelic visitation? How would she explain to Joseph she was pregnant, and the baby was not his?

But notice the **complete absence** in the Gospels of **Mary** attempting to **defend herself** to Joseph. Mary did not work it to make her story acceptable to anyone, including Joseph. There is no account of her begging or pleading with Joseph to believe her. She leaves it all to God. She **trusts God to defend her honor**.

3. What decisions do you **NOT need to explain** or **defend yourself** to others because you have left it to God?

(Read verses 20-24) Upon hearing of Mary’s pregnancy with a child not from him, Joseph prepares to do what seems to be the noble thing to do—divorce Mary quietly. Infidelity would not only have destroyed Mary’s chances for any future marriage, it also endangered her life. Infidelity was punishable by death.

Imagine if Joseph had divorced Mary quietly. If so, he would never have taken her to Bethlehem. Jesus would not have been born there, as had been prophesied 800 years earlier by the prophet Isaiah. Providentially, **God sent an angel** to Joseph to explain to him the truth and the miracle of Mary’s pregnancy, thus **saving Joseph from making a terrible mistake**.

4. How has **God sent someone to save you from making a terrible mistake**?

CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE & USE PRAYER LIST AS BIBLE BOOK MARKER

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## PRAYER GROUP TIME

*(Make a list of people whom those in your group plan to witness Christ to this week.)*

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