

Joseph – The Earthly Father of Jesus as a Model for Manhood



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Joseph is the forgotten figure of the Christmas story. He stands silent. He is spoken to and he is spoken about, but not a single syllable crosses his lips. He is viewed at best as just a bit player, an extra, in the Christmas drama. He has been pushed aside. And yet, he is vitally important because of what God said to him and what God did through him. His faith, his courage, his strength, his sensitivity, his compassion, his devotion, his determination, his foresight, and his obedience to the will of God actually have a greater impact on Christian thought and on the Christian lifestyle than we have been willing to acknowledge. Imagine Joseph comes for counseling. What would that sound like?

Joseph – Dealing with Good/Bad & Hope!

Joseph – "I had this dream ... " Dream #3 – Matthew 2:19-20.

1. Good News & Bad News → The message of Dream #3 is that Christmas is a time of **BOTH** bad news and Good News. Herod died! The angel was saying that God's judgment had prevailed. "The wages of sin is death," and Herod's demise was unmistakable proof.
2. Manager & Massacre → The Christmas story contains both to remind us that there is a struggle going on within us. The evil that is within us will do anything to destroy the good that is within us. Once we surrender, even slightly, to that evil, it will seize control and destroy the good. That is precisely what happened to Herod.
3. NOW, but not yet → God was working His plan all along Joseph's journey. God brought Joseph & Jesus safely out of Bethlehem to Egypt. And, brought father & son safely out of Egypt to Calvary. The final victory over sin, evil and death is secured in God's time. It will happen in God's good time and great mercy. Never doubt it. Believe it! Joseph modeled it!

Joseph – Tx for GOOD/BAD – Own Your Story!

1. **Embrace Good & Bad** → The ability to handle the coexistence of good and bad is fundamental to growth and development. We live in a world that has both good and bad as part of everyday reality. Love exists, but there are many examples of relating in fear. Talented people are everywhere, but lazy people are wasteful of their gifts. I can name men who seem to be evil, and yet they are men who are fathers and husbands who are adored by their families. The world is beautiful in so many ways, but it is also filled with pain and waste. To deny one or the other is to demand perfection or to live in denial.
2. **Value BOTH** → Many people try to deal with this reality by seeking to categorize people and events as good or bad. This is an impossible strategy. You cannot separate people in that black and white manner. Children tend to be that way. They are unable to accept anything less than perfection. “I want it now!” However, mature people have the ability to fully acknowledge the bad, while at the same time see whatever good may exist in a person or event. Appropriate value is given to both the good and the bad without minimizing either one.
3. **Forgiveness** → Growing in resolving good and bad requires the ability to forgive. There is no major psychological or spiritual discipline that does not offer some remedy for failure. Forgiveness is a non-negotiable skill that facilitates growth in resolving good and bad. To forgive is to acknowledge the wrong and yet, place more value on the relationship than the offense. A growing, mature man can do that!

Joseph – "I had another dream... ! – Dream #4

- Matthew 2:21-23

1. HOPE → Joseph modeled the promise of hope. When his life's journey seemed darkest, God gave Joseph the promise of hope—a hope postponed, but ultimately realized.
2. Mystery → Dream #4 is a message of mystery, containing a priceless treasure. God told Joseph in the dream to take the child to Nazareth, where the young Messiah would grow from childhood to adulthood. Nazareth was not much of a place.
3. Model → Joseph modeled to Jesus what being a father really meant. Jesus learned from Joseph. When Jesus wanted us to know what God is like He said, "God is like a strong, brave, tender, loving, understanding Father", He would have learned much from Joseph.

Joseph – Tx for HOPE – Own Your Story!

1. Understand → “My hope is in God ... “ Understand what has to be there for that to be so! Wishing is 100% subjective. Hope is not subjective. When we have hope, it’s the last thing we *feel*. Proverbs 13:12.
2. Past → Hope is not an orientation toward future, but it has everything to do with the past. God gives history lessons (the Red Sea, Hebrews 11). We look forward toward the future as we’ve gotten from our past.
3. Reality → There is no hope without:
 1. Character change. – Proverbs 15:19.
 2. Tiny successes – “a longing fulfilled.” – Proverbs 13:12.
 3. Wisdom is gained through experience. – Proverbs 24:14.
 4. Transcendence – there is a God who transcends all hopelessness. – Job 13:15 & Proverbs 23:17-18.

ACTION: Journal This!

1. Who has been a model of manhood for you?
2. Are you a “black & white” thinker? Can you embrace GRAY?
3. When have you lost hope? How was hope restored?