

TITLE AND NUMBER: 111. The birth of Jesus Christ



REFERENCE AND KEY VERSE(S): Matthew 1:18-25

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.' (v18-21) When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. (v24-25)

What does this Bible passage tell us?

The visit of the archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary is probably one of the best-known stories in the Bible. But our Christmas nativity plays do not always include Joseph's part in the events. Without his co-operation, however, there might have been a very different outcome.

At that time, a pledge to be married could only be ended by divorce. It seems that Joseph was a kind man. When he found out that Mary was pregnant, he could have caused trouble for her; instead, he decided to divorce her quietly. An angel then appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him what to do. Joseph must have been worried, but he followed the angel's instructions.

An angel appeared to Joseph again after Jesus was born and told him to take his family to Egypt because Herod wanted to kill Jesus. Joseph obeyed the angel. He was told twice more in dreams when to move on to keep his family safe and again he obeyed.

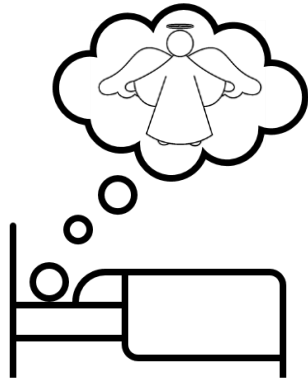
We can see that Joseph was a man who loved and obeyed God. He was also a kind and loving husband and father who looked after his young family and was a good role model for Jesus.

It is important that we are good role models. If others see us behaving badly or thoughtlessly, they will think it is acceptable for them to do so. Consider the saying 'actions speak louder than words.' If we say one thing and do another, people are unlikely to do what we ask. However, if we show by our actions the right way to live, backing this up with words, people will see the positive results of our actions. They are then more likely to do what is right, leading a life pleasing to God, to others and to themselves.

Reflections:

- It cannot have been easy for Joseph to follow the angel's instructions. How can we know that following God's instructions is the right way to live?
- If you ever feel uncomfortable about a decision you have made, ask yourself whether it is what God would want you to do.
- Are you a good role model for others? If not, why not? And how might you become one?

Write or draw something you read in this Bible Study that stood out to you.



Do you have any questions about this week's Bible Study?



How does this week's message apply to your life?



What can we learn about God from this week's passage?



What would you like to ask God this week?



Has God responded to your prayers this week in the way you had hoped for? It's okay to talk to God about this.

