

Summary

This sermon explores the story of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus, as found in Matthew 1:18-25. The pastor presents Joseph as the first natural-born disciple of Jesus Christ in Matthew's Gospel. When Joseph discovers Mary is pregnant, he faces three options: have her stoned according to the law, divorce her quietly, or marry her as God commands through an angel. The sermon emphasizes that Joseph's decision to take Mary as his wife wasn't based on pity or obligation, but because he believed Jesus was the Messiah who came to save people from their sins. This represents a radical transformation for Joseph, who was accustomed to God appearing as powerful forces like storms and fire in the Old Testament, not as a vulnerable baby. The story demonstrates how encountering Jesus Christ leads to discipleship - a radical internal transformation involving new priorities, new identity, and new mercy. Joseph's response shows immediate obedience and action, making him a model disciple who believed and behaved as if Jesus was truly the Messiah.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we gather together to study Your Word, we ask that You would open our hearts and minds to what You want to teach us today. Help us to be like Joseph - willing to listen to Your voice and respond with faith and obedience. Lord, we pray that You would speak to each person in this group in the way they need to hear from You. Give us ears to hear, hearts to receive, and the courage to apply what we learn to our daily lives. We invite Your Holy Spirit to guide our discussion and draw us closer to You and to one another. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Ice Breaker

What's one Christmas tradition from your childhood that you still enjoy or remember fondly today?

Key Verses

1. Matthew 1:18-25
2. Deuteronomy 22:23-24
3. Deuteronomy 24:1
4. Isaiah 7:14
5. Matthew 28:19-20

Questions

1. Joseph had three options when he discovered Mary was pregnant. What do you think was going through his mind during this difficult time?
2. The sermon mentions that Joseph was 'a man of the law' but needed to become 'a man of God.' What's the difference between following rules and following God?

3. How do you think Joseph's understanding of God changed when he learned that God was coming as a baby rather than as a storm, fire, or powerful force?
4. Joseph is described as the first disciple in Matthew's Gospel because he both believed and behaved as if Jesus was the Messiah. How do we sometimes struggle with the gap between believing and behaving?
5. The angel told Joseph 'do not be afraid' - not of the angel, but of doing the right thing. What are some situations where we might be afraid to do what God is asking of us?
6. Joseph immediately took action after his encounter with God. Why do you think some people delay or hesitate when they sense God leading them?
7. The sermon defines discipleship as 'radical internal transformation with a new priority, new identity, and new mercy.' Which of these three areas do you feel God is working on most in your life right now?
8. Joseph's story shows that God sometimes gives us choices rather than forcing us to obey. How does this understanding of God's character affect your relationship with Him?

Life Application

This week, identify one area where you sense God is asking you to step out in faith or obedience, even if it feels uncomfortable or costly. Like Joseph, choose to do what God wants rather than what seems easiest or most convenient. Take one concrete action step this week that demonstrates you believe Jesus is who He says He is.

Key Takeaways

1. Joseph was the first natural-born disciple in Matthew's Gospel, demonstrating both belief and behavior that Jesus was the Messiah
2. True discipleship involves radical internal transformation with new priorities, new identity, and new mercy
3. God often gives us choices rather than forcing obedience, asking us to decide between our will and His will
4. Joseph's immediate response to God's direction shows that encounters with Jesus should lead to action, not just contemplation
5. The Christmas story is ultimately a conversion story about how Jesus changes lives when people truly encounter Him

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for the example of Joseph, who chose to trust and obey You even when it was difficult and costly. Help us to be people who not only believe in You but live as if we truly believe You are who You say You are. Give us the courage to follow Your will over our own plans, and help us to respond immediately when You call us to action. Transform our priorities, our identity, and our mercy to reflect Your heart. May we be disciples who demonstrate our faith through our choices and actions. Continue to change our lives as we encounter You more deeply. In Your precious name, Amen.

