

Joseph's Love Took Courage



Matthew 1:18

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she found to be with child by the Holy Spirit.

Joseph's love took courage. We don't often think of Joseph that way. Rather than being known for courage, he seems more of a non-entity, present of course, but not a key performer. He's featured briefly during Mary's pregnancy, but fades into the background once they've paid their taxes and returned from Egypt. He and Mary do travel to Jerusalem for Jesus' baptism and their yearly Passover trips, but once Jesus is twelve, Joseph disappears from view. Other than naming Mary's baby "Jesus," no words of his are ever mentioned. All we have is a description of his actions – but what revealing actions! For Joseph loved his wife and loved her well. He served her at great cost to himself. Joseph's love took courage.

Inner Courage ... Outer Obedience ... A Heart of Love

Joseph listens well. Five times God warns him in a dream, and five times Joseph obeys. *Your fiancée is pregnant - marry her.* And Joseph does. *Don't return to Herod.* And Joseph doesn't. *Flee to Egypt.* And Joseph flees. *Go to Israel.* And Joseph goes. *Settle in Galilee.* And Joseph obeys to keep his family safe.

But travel was the least of Joseph's problems. Physical demands and unsettled conditions hurt a lot less than a soiled reputation. Joseph, a righteous man, faced shame – everybody knew he wasn't the *real* father of Mary's firstborn son. Not many would have bought his story that God caused his fiancée to conceive. They must have thought him crazy to believe she was still virgin. Those who heard his story undoubtedly thought him either a fool to believe her story or a liar who was covering up his own role in her pregnancy. He could have avoided the jibes and sideways glances if he publicly humiliated her and blamed her for sleeping around. But he refused. He loved her too much. Instead of disgracing her, he took disgrace upon himself. He protected her. He believed her. He believed God. That took great courage.

**Joseph protected Mary. He cared for her.
How his love must have gifted Mary's heart!**

What fuels courage? In Jesus' case it was love; love made Jesus willing to endure love's cost. But endure it He did. And so did Joseph. Jesus, for the joy of loving us, endured the shame of the cross. Joseph, for the joy of loving Mary, endured shame as well. Joseph's love took courage and must have gifted Mary's heart.

Matthew 1:18-25

¹⁸ Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows. When His mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ And Joseph...being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. ²⁰ But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. ²¹ "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." ²² Now all this took place that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us." ²⁴ And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took her as his wife, ²⁵ and kept her a virgin until she gave birth to a Son; and he called His name Jesus.

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