

Marriage Series #2 - Joseph & Mary

by Don McClure

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trust in God and surrender to His plan, highlighting the examples of Mary and Joseph's relationship and the benefits of prioritizing one's relationship with God above all else.

Duration: 58:55

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-24, Luke 1:26-28, Luke 2:49

Topics: "Faith And Trust", "Gods Plan"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the challenges and confusion that believers may face when following God's path. He shares a story of a young man who had a successful career in the Air Force but chose to follow Christ and give his life to Him. The speaker also mentions the conversation between Mary and Joseph when Mary revealed her miraculous pregnancy. The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting God's plan and the assurance that He will take care of His followers.

Transcript

Tonight we're going to be looking at Joseph and Mary in this kind of a series that will probably take five or six weeks and Sunday nights studying marriage together. And so if you'll turn with me to both the book of Luke chapter one, hold your finger in there once you get there, and then turn as well to Matthew chapter one, we're going to look at Joseph and Mary. And to me, I've entitled them in my own notes, the qualities of a successful marriage.

They had a lot of things to learn, like every marriage has to learn, but they learned them. But beginning at first in Luke chapter one, beginning at verse twenty-six, we'll find out what the scriptures have to say and tell us a little about Joseph and Mary. It says, Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin, betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David.

The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.

But when she saw him, she was troubled at his sight, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, Don't be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus.

And he will be great, and will be called the son of the highest, and the Lord will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. Then Mary said to the angel, How can this be, since I do not know a man? And the angel answered, And he said unto her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the highest will overshadow you.

Therefore also the Holy One, who is to be born, will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age. And this is now the sixth month for who is called barren.

For with God nothing will be impossible. Then Mary said, Behold the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.

And the angel departed from her. Then on over to Matthew, chapter 1, verse 18, another side of the same story. Now the birth of Jesus was as follows.

After his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph, her husband, being a just man and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But when he thought about these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, and saying, Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary, your wife.

For that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a son, and you will call his name Jesus. And he will save his people from their sins.

Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled that which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which is translated God with us. Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took to him his wife, and did not know her until she brought forth her firstborn son, and he called his name Jesus. Let's pray and let's look at this together.

Lord, how we thank you for your word. And we ask tonight as we study the relationship of Joseph and Mary, the things, Lord, that they had to learn in their life, in their marriage. Lord, we ask you to teach it to every one of us.

Qualities that we all require for any relationship to succeed, but more so than any in a marriage. But we ask you to teach them to us all, whether we're married or not. Lord, if we've been married a long time, we ask that you would just re-teach us these things if we need be taught them.

Lord, if we are young and not even thinking of marriage at this time, but Lord, that we would take these things and learn them. Ponder them in our heart, and Lord, that when the day comes that we'd be called upon for them, we'd know them. And so teach us, feed us, Father.

For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I think it's probably safe to say that there probably has never been a marriage quite like Joseph and Mary's in many ways.

At least as an initial evaluation of it, I think everyone would say their relationship was quite unique. And yet, with a little closer investigation of their marriage, you come to find I don't think it is all that unique. In the sense that the things that they had to learn, every marriage has to learn them.

And they had to learn them. Maybe just to give a little of the scenario, as we read, of course, out of Matthew and Luke, in piecing these things together, it doesn't take too long to realize that here's this young couple, obviously a godly couple. The Lord spoke to both of them and worked within both of their lives and selected them for this relationship, selected them for this marriage, selected them to be, of course, married to be the mother of Jesus, and Joseph there to be as a stepfather, to physically care for this baby, of course, coming into the world and to lead him and guide him in many ways.

But here is this young godly couple, I'm sure very much in love. They probably, of course, here they are during what is called in the Bible an espousal period. It's much like our engagement period, only a little bit more intense in it is the way the espousal period was.

It was one to where essentially they were married. They were already sharing the financial responsibilities, they were already working through a lot of other things in the marriage, but they were not yet married. They were espoused, more intense, as I said, than our engagement, but it was not yet consummated in a physical relationship.

And they still both were to maintain their purity and their virginity until the pronouncement of their engagement or espousal period coming to an end, and then the marriage to head off. But we would think of it very much and very close to what we call engagement. And I'm sure this couple very much in love.

I'm sure they were quite a happy couple, an excited couple. Probably had all the plans that everybody kind of has until one day Angel Gabriel came along and kind of threw a monkey wrench right in the middle of this thing. He definitely fouled things up for a time, didn't he? And here he comes along, of course, to Mary, and he tells her, you know, Mary, blessed art thou among women.

And then as the salutation goes on, she's trying to figure out what's going on, what's being discussed here. And then he said, you're going to bring forth a child. You're going to have a son, and he will be the child of the Most Highest.

He will be Emmanuel, God with us. He is going to become the Savior of the world. He will inherit the throne of his father David.

But of his kingdom there should be no end. You are going to be the woman that is going to bring forth he who is from everlasting to everlasting, the King of kings, the Lord of lords. You're chosen.

Blessed art thou among women. Well, here as the angel speaks to her, she, of course, is immediately taken back. And she said, well, we've got a little problem here.

And the problem is, is how could this be since I've never known a man? And all the things to say, I'm going to have a child. Well, she was wise enough to know where they came from. She, of course, realized that requirement had never been fulfilled in her life, to have a child in that way, and she said to him, how could this be? And then he explained to her, no, no, this is not going to be the result of any physical relationship.

This isn't going to be anything that Joseph or any other human is going to participate in. Joseph can't, of course, produce such a man as such a one that could fulfill being the son of God. One of the things that's an absolute requirement of Christianity, essentially, the very foundation of it is the virgin birth of Christ.

If Jesus was just born of men, then he was a sinner like the rest of them. But it had to be something where Mary, she could provide a physical visible body for the Messiah, but she couldn't provide the life. That had

been forfeited in sin.

Man, ever since he died in sin, he was dead in his trespasses and sins. And Adam and Eve, they could reproduce, but they could only reproduce that which they were, bodily alive, you know, soulishly active, but spiritually, they were dead. And for Jesus to be able to come and spiritually minister to anyone, he had to be born from above.

And so the angel explains to her, no, that which is going to be born of you will be that of the Holy Spirit. He will overshadow you. Almost, to me, a wonderful picture, much like the Hebrew word in transliteration here in the Greek, of a word almost of brooding over.

In a sense, just as in the Old Testament, when the Spirit of God literally brooded over creation, brooded over, in a sense, the forming of Adam in the garden. And then as the Spirit of God was breathed into that hunk of clay, and Adam came alive. Well, Mary could provide the physical body, but that's it.

The Spirit of God must do the rest. And so there, as this was a heavenly and a spiritual work, there was no physical contact or anything like that, of course. But it was one there to where, as she realizes this, she, of course, she says, Well, be it unto me according to thy word.

She then goes from there, though, and I'm sure it must have been interesting, listening to her try to explain this to Joseph, but, of course, he couldn't hear it. He doesn't believe, and doesn't believe it at all. So Mary ends up going there to visit, who would believe, because here Gabriel had explained to her that Elizabeth and Zacharias, that she was with child, not miraculous at all.

John the Baptist, though he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb miraculously, he was the production of a normal human relationship. Zacharias was very much the father. And God had particularly and wonderfully planned for John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus.

Well, Mary ended up as she kind of did the things that a lot of girls in this sort of circumstance tend to do. She went and visited relatives. And there she went to Zacharias and Elizabeth's house.

There she had a wonderful fellowship, for she no sooner got there, of course, than there, as the Lord had even revealed it unto Elizabeth, she calls Mary the mother of the Lord. And there John the Baptist even leaps within the womb of Elizabeth. And it is a wonderful testimony in the scriptures of a cognizant life in the womb, of a real life that's in there, as John the Baptist even there when Jesus was brought in there within the womb of Mary.

And John the Baptist's forerunner even leaped within him. But meantime, Joseph, he's back there, he's tossing and turning, I think probably night after night, trying to decide what is he going to do. He realizes, you know, the only thing he can decide to do is to just put Mary away secretly.

He didn't believe her story, obviously, and he was just going to put her away rather than bring disgrace upon her and upon her whole family. Then, as the word tells us, though, is that then Gabriel came and spoke to Joseph in a dream and explains to her the same thing and tells her, No, Joseph, this is so. She's going to bring forth a son, and you will call his name Jesus.

He will save his people. And then when Joseph realized that Mary was telling the truth, as the angel revealed it unto him, he went and joined her and took her to be his wife. And, of course, though, he did not go on to physically know her until after the birth of Jesus.

But when you watch this marriage, when you watch this relationship develop, to me, as I said earlier, it had all the basic qualities that are vital, that are foundational for the success of any marriage, for them to occur. Though the story is quite unique, it isn't really, not with the issues that they had to decide. The first thing about them that they had to decide that every marriage has to deal with is, number one, trust.

There had to be something in their relationship where the first thing, just trust in the Lord. Number one, that's what they both had to do. He had to absolutely be number one in life.

And to me, this is an amazing thing when I look at Mary. When you stop to think here of this young woman, and here she is with all of life ahead of her. There's Joseph and all their plans and all their dreams, and out of the blue, quite literally, an angel comes to her and disrupts her whole plan of life.

And he tells her, in essence, you know, I'm going to change your life forever, and I want you to follow me. I want your life to be available that I can take my Son, or the Son of God, and place Him within your life. And your life will change, obviously, as a result.

So, he didn't make any promises to her of how Joseph would receive it, what would happen to her marriage, what would happen to her family, what would happen to her future, what happened to anything. She had to, there at that conversation, release her entire future into the hands of God. It had to be something there, and I believe everyone in life has to do this.

There's got to be a thing in our life to where we're really able, as much as the Lord gives us one another, as much as we're to love one another in this life, and as much as we can be excited about and contemplating the idea of having one another, it's still the most vital thing in life is that, number one, I trust Him, to where the Lord is absolutely number one within my life. And, of course, Jesus Himself explained this quite simply, quite clear. He said, if any man come after me and ate not his mother, father, wife, children, yea, even his own life, he isn't worthy of me.

He looks there and He says, I want to make it quite clear that the foundational issue of all of life, He says, I want to be number one. It's not a negotiable thing as far as He's concerned. As far as Jesus is concerned, He says, if anybody comes after me and follows me, and you refuse to put me first within your life, if there is mother, father, wife, children, yea, even your own life that comes ahead of me, you ought to hate that relationship.

We're never to hate people. But I believe we are, and Jesus teaches us, if there's any relationship in all of our life that means more than our relationship with Him, we ought to hate the fact that a relationship, a human relationship, a finite relationship, has more authority in our soul than God. That anything, that anybody that would speak, any voice we would hear, whether it's the voice of a mother or a father or a wife or a husband or a child or anybody else in all the world that we would ever hear any form of communication with, that if it would have greater authority than the voice of heaven, we ought to hate it.

We ought to despise the fact that something has been able to exercise such a powerful authority, it's actually put God into a lesser place. And it's something there that Mary, early on in her life, she had to come to grips with this. Here as the Lord came and He called her to Himself in a special way, she had to be able to take her entire life and set it aside.

Little did she, I think, realize the ultimate ramifications and how wonderful this would be and how God would work things out in a glorious way, but she at the time just had to, her issue now was surrender. And

she had to give up something. She had to give up Joseph.

She had to give up her future. She had to be willing. And so many times as we're going through our life, we're constantly, there's something out here, I want this, I want it so.

I wish I had this. It's within our grasp almost, and then sometimes the Lord says, no, let it go. And then the turmoil begins.

Here God lets this whole engagement, the whole espousal period come along, all the sense of the hope, the closeness as any engagement period would have, those times together, walking in the evening, contemplating, discussing their lives, discussing their future, discussing their children, discussing all of these things that every engaged couple thinks and plans, all of the intimate heart and thought of life, and then to have something come in in the middle at such a timing like this and to where God interceded and said, Mary, I want to be number one. And all in the ramifications of it was you got to set Joseph aside. He didn't say at all what would happen with this.

No assurances or insurance of anything. But however he does tell us, and something I think that is important that we'd all know, is the Lord tells us, he promises it in a word. He tells us if anybody comes after me, and he says he gives up house, home, lands, goods, he gives up anything in this life, he tells them, he says, I will restore it a hundredfold in this life and in the life to come.

The wonderful promise is, and the Lord knows these tensions, he knows these difficulties that every human being has. He knows how much, you know, how real these pressures are, how great the impulses and the desires for all the things of a marriage or a home or in a family, in a house, in a home, in goods and cars and everything. But when we can come, and he just says, if you're willing to surrender it, and he says, I promise you, you'll never ever give anything up.

That's one of the things that I learned, and I'm so grateful I learned. I've never given up a thing. Never at all in my life, as a Christian, that's for sure, that it isn't something where God promises.

All you're doing any time as a Christian, you give anything up, you're not giving up, you're only investing it in the wisest way. Could you ever dream of any investment that will promise a guaranteed hundredfold return? That's what his word, the very one that tells me he's going to redeem me, and change me into his image, says, don't ever worry about what you give to me. It's taken care of.

But at the time, the pressure couldn't be so hard. At the time, the difficulty of it. And she had to deal with this.

And so also, though, I believe every marriage, that where we really come in our own life and we know what it is to put things first, and then when we surrender it. Somebody once said, you never possess anything until you've surrendered it. You never own it until you've given it up.

And then when you've given it up and God gives it back to you, from now on it's a gift, it's a borrowed thing. When you have to hold on to any relationship, when there's anything you say, I cannot give this up, I absolutely have to have this unnegotiably, you're in trouble. You're on very scary ground.

There's somebody that you're trusting in more than you're trusting in the Lord. But when you can look and say, God, you're first. And as much as I may love my husband or my wife or my job or my children or my anything, I love you first.

If you want to do your mate the greatest favor or anyone else in this life, you'll ever do them, put the Lord ahead of them. Don't even on an equal plane or a lesser. If you want to help them and you want to strengthen your relationship with them, put the Lord first and then see to it in your own heart, you can, as difficult as it may be, sit there and say, Lord, they're next.

And at the time that this is happening, all we see maybe is we're losing. All we see is I don't like this. God, is this some test or what's happening or what's going on or we're confused.

But when we're willing to follow him, many times I think he does things that initially are confusing to the soul, but they're strengthening to the faith. And it reminded me as I was thinking about this of a story of a fellow when I was down in Redlands. He went to the Air Force Academy, brilliant young man and difficult school to get into, and he got into it.

And he went through it and he came out of it with honors and he had quite a career all going for him. And he had the dream of being a fighter pilot and moving up through the Air Force and flying the F-15s and everything else. But through the process of this whole time in the Air Force, he got converted.

He came to Christ and he'd given him his life and he'd loved the word. And he began to grow and grow and day by day he was just in it. And next thing he knew is that the love for the word, the love for God, it just so grew within him.

It's like all these things that were once so important in his life, they just were taking a lesser place and he felt called to the mission field. And so called and he prayed so much about it, that he ended up going to his commanding officer to find out what he would have to do to get an early release from the Air Force. Hoping that God, as he prayed much about it, that God was just going to work it out and get him this release so he could go get training to go on to the mission field.

But rather than that, they not only didn't give him an early release, they sent him to Norton Air Force Base in Southern California where I met him, which for an Air Force Academy man and a guy who wanted to be a fighter pilot, wasn't the place you really usually wanted to go. That's kind of a cargo. The C-5s and the C-131s, and it's a cargo place that keeps the supplies running back and forth to the United States, the Philippines and others.

So there's no big hotshot fighter pilots flying in and out around there. And they just took him out of the program he was in, decided, well, we can't keep him in this program when the guy gets an opportunity to leave. And he'd just been honest and done what he prayed about and thought was right.

And here he's wondering, what am I doing here? How could such a thing like this happen when he felt he was just honoring God and seeking his will? Well, he talked to me one time about it. And we had a number of conversations. And he was a really wonderful young man.

But I asked him, well, what has God told you to do with your life? He says, missions. I said, then start doing it. Start doing it now.

Don't wait until you get out of the Air Force. And we had a team of about 30 people that went down every six weeks to Mexico. We built a number of churches down there and trained leaders.

And we went back and forth and had a medical team and a food team and a building team. And they went down. And there was a wonderful thing.

I said, get involved with that. So he prayed about it. And he said, if you're called to missions, it isn't some day.

It's right now. Well, he went off down for a weekend. He came back from over the weekend.

His first weekend, I think it was. And he had stars in his eyes. He was the most excited guy.

And he says, you'll never guess who I met this weekend on a missionary trip. Well, I didn't have to guess the way he was looking. I married the two of them about a year later.

And now they're on the mission field today. But the thing is, so often, when we are just doing what God wants, as best we know it, maybe there's things that are diversion. God takes away something and doesn't seem to replace it.

Or he may put us through a sequence that all we just see is a void for a time. But even in that, the wisdom of God is smarter than the intelligence of men. And what God was doing at that time, it was wonderful.

He was just preparing him and bringing him to a greater degree of just trust in the Lord. Joseph, not only Mary had to learn what it was to put the Lord first, so also did Joseph. He's somebody, when you look at him, he had to learn the exact same lesson.

I'm sure he loved Mary deeply. I'm sure he was somebody there that he obviously, though, when she came to him with this story, could you imagine if there's sometimes some things that you read in the Bible that I just wish I had a video of. And it would just be quite a thing to listen to these two.

When Mary came to Joseph after this and says, Joe, we've got to talk. Now sit down, because this is the most exciting stuff you've ever heard. And he's probably, okay, tell me.

He maybe came there and probably had to be as nervous as any human ever was. If you could imagine this conversation. You know what had to happen between the two of them.

But as she tried to explain Gabriel, she tried to explain this whole thing. I'm sure Joseph's mind just had to immediately just spin. The man had to be borderline incoherent, staring at her, trying to figure out what in the world is she talking about.

I thought I knew her. She's sweet. She's kind.

She's precious. She's a spiritual woman. She's wonderful.

I dreamed of being married to her, but I can't believe I'm hearing what I'm hearing. Why can't you tell me the truth? And though he couldn't believe what he thought was the obvious truth, I'm sure. But there he found himself there, just coming to the place where he couldn't go on with the marriage.

He there looked there and he realized that biblically that God couldn't bless the relationship as he understood it. She'd been unfaithful to him. And she'd lied about it.

That's all he knew. He didn't believe. He was going to put her away, it says, secretly.

Maybe just out of honor for the family, but he couldn't go on with it. He looked there and realized that we have obviously no foundation for a relationship here. We have no way that we can go on as long as you're going to talk to me and tell me stuff like this.

There's no way at all that we can go on. And here is the two of them probably talk. He had to learn himself.

He had to trust her and maybe he loved her and he cared and everything within him. Maybe he says, oh, go on with it. Maybe in all of his own impulses, I still love her so.

And maybe she's made a dumb mistake and she's been stupid about it and she's not able to trust me enough. But there was still something, Lord, I can't do this. Can't go on with it.

Because he knew you've got to be right with each other to build a marriage. You've got to. And there was something to where they weren't right.

As far as every faculty within him as a human being, I'm quite sure he realized this was not right. But being willing, she was willing to give him up, he was willing to give her up. And that was something both of them, I believe, just out of a wonderful priority of honoring God.

And God wonderfully works at times like that. When somebody, though you may have somebody out there in front of you and they seem like the apparent person and the one that you want and seems to be so good. But if it isn't at the very core of it, something to where the Lord is first in your life, you ought to step back right away and stay away from it like a plague until he puts it where it ought to be.

And that to me is so important. I remember when I started growing in the Lord when I was in college. And it was just starting to come together as I was growing and getting into the Word and having some fellowship with others and in kind of a discipleship group.

And we would talk about our relationships and things. Well, at the time I was in college and I was dating a girl. I was in fraternity life.

She was in sorority. And she was a very pretty girl, nothing like my wife, of course. But, I mean, very pretty, very nice girl, very sweet girl.

And she was a yell leader for the football team and all this, very popular. And we had a fine relationship and a lot of fun, very entertaining, enjoyable person. But as all this began stirring within me, the thing is I would begin to talk to her about what God was doing in my life.

As I look into her face, it was always blank. It was like, well, okay. But she had no interest.

The more we talked, and she, to me, the more I knew her and as much as I liked her and as much as I cared for her, and she cared for me. It was something, though, I began to realize we do not have this in common. We used to have a fine life in common, but the Lord came into mind and began to disrupt the whole thing.

And next thing you know, it seems like every time we're out and every date or every discussion, and I can remember sitting around and just having endless discussions because I was saying my life was going in a different direction. And as far as she was concerned, she was getting mad at God because he was spoiling a fine relationship. And she liked God.

She believed in God. She went to Mass several times a week. And she even got his, finally the day I'll never forget, I was sitting out in the parking lot in college and they're saying, this is it.

I'm sorry, but I know I can't go on with this. And I like you and I care for you and you're a wonderful person. But I just know I had one of the guys that I prayed with and met with regularly, and we talked and talked and prayed about this, and I realized the need to let her go.

Although, in my own heart, I was hoping through it she'll get saved. And something dramatic will happen, and God wants me to give her up, and if I give her up, he's going to fix her and give her back. Well, I did my part.

He never did his. But the thing is, is he did. In essence, what I wanted.

I never dreamed I'd get what he did have for me. But if I couldn't give her up, I never, obviously, would have met the woman that I did that was the perfect compliment for me. And the one that was fashioned in heaven for me.

She was fine, but nothing like what I got. But I had to go through the trial of giving it up. And I think that's, and Joseph and Mary went through that.

They had to trust the Lord first. Secondly, they had to trust the Lord for each other's lives. I'm sure, again, how much they loved each other.

And again, I wonder what these conversations were about on how is Mary probably again and again tried to explain this to Joseph. Imagine she looked there, and I don't know how many times Joseph probably said, Okay, now let's go through this again. Let me hear this story again.

An angel. But it was a he angel, wasn't it? Angel Gabriel he, you know, came. And I see, I mean, who knows what the guy was thinking here.

Somebody came and, were you drinking anything at the time that this angel visited with you, dear Mary? Now tell me all about this one more time. But it was something there that I'm sure that no matter, you know, how much they talked, how much they tried to share, that he just stared within this woman and realized there that it's, there's no hope here. You see, because ultimately what had to happen is Joseph ultimately needed the exact same supernatural spiritual revelation that Mary did herself.

That here, it wasn't revealed to Mary by human ears. It was revealed by heaven. God came and made it known unto her.

The Lord opened up her heart at life, and yet he hadn't done it for Joseph. Hadn't happened for him. And it's interesting here that until that happened, it wasn't going to happen.

I think you could talk till you're blue in the face. You're going to be talking two different languages, no matter how hard you try. And the interesting thing to me about this relationship, and I think this is again common about most marriages, and that is this couple, as fine as they were, they didn't grow together.

Oftentimes you do. And that's wonderful when that happens. But the longer you get, you're married, the more you realize oftentimes you don't, you aren't growing together.

Different things are happening in your lives at different times. And I wondered about that when I studied this. And I didn't know about you, but I mean, did you, I wonder why, why didn't God tell them both together at the same time? Why didn't he do that? Why didn't you just tell them one night while they're together? I'm sure they're commonly together, as every engaged couple wants to be.

You could have saved three months of misery, three months of miscommunication, three months of misunderstanding, of suffering, of grief, of mistrust with each other, of a broken down relationship. You could have saved it all. Why didn't you just tell Joseph and Mary one night while they were out for a walk together? Why didn't Gabriel come together? Joseph, Mary.

Exciting news. Sit down. Let's talk.

And then you work it out to where the both of them together. It all happened right there at the same time. Wouldn't that have been easy? It would have been wonderful, I think most people would think.

Why not tell the whole family, though, as well? Why not tell them all, you know? I'm sure they both came from very devout, you know, Hebrew, good Jewish families and things. Why not tell them both? You know, not only tell the both of them, tell all the family. Because you also, there when Jesus came, he separated an entire family.

Make no mistake about that. That's what he did. He could have done it differently, but he didn't.

You remember at the time that, of course, when Mary, you know, brought forth Jesus, when he was born, they were in Bethlehem. Why were they in Bethlehem? Caesar. He had told all the world to be taxed.

We're doing a census. You're to go back to the, you know, the house of your own lineage. And here it was something.

When he came back to Bethlehem, he came home. Joseph came to a city filled with relatives. Moms, dads, uncles, aunts, cousins.

They were all ordered by Caesar to be there. And it was something there. They were all, no doubt, in town.

As he got there, it was something that matured the place. But he didn't go to mom's and dad's house. He didn't go to some aunt and uncle.

He didn't go to some cousin's house. He didn't go to a brother's house. He didn't do that.

I think sometimes we miss a tremendous story when most people just know they came to Bethlehem and forget. We don't realize what he came into. But they went to an inn.

They went to a place, I mean, I think they'd been through enough grief and struggle in their own relationship to realize, sure, I'm going to go home to dad. I'm going home to uncle, you know, Simon and aunt so-and-so, or my cousins. I'm going to walk in with my engaged wife, nine months pregnant, ready to, you know, already in labor pains as we're nearing town.

And I'm going to walk in. Guess what? You guys will never believe the exciting stuff we got to tell you. This baby here is from heaven.

Honest. You know, I'm sure they probably themselves, they learned enough to realize that until the Lord reveals, until he speaks, they'd been through enough separation and struggle in their own life, they just decide, let's go to an inn. Our families aren't going to believe this until God reveals it.

To them, they're not. And, you know, why not tell Bethlehem? Why not tell all Israel? Why not tell the world? Well, the reason is, is because, in simple fact, God raises us all individually. He raised Mary

individually.

He raised Joseph individually. He raises families individually, their own children. Remember, they didn't come to Christ until after Jesus' resurrection.

His half-brothers and sisters spent 30 years with him, didn't believe. But it's something that here is that they go through this struggle. They come to the realization that so often God uses these times of separation.

Gabriel there, as the Lord said to him, you go speak to Mary, and then he lets her sit in this for three months. And he says, now go tell Joseph. And you say, why not tell them both together? Well, I believe, because in the wisdom of God, it drew Mary closer to God.

He kept the relationship right, the priorities right. Not that he wanted to bring confusion and heartache and grief into this relationship, but he wanted to strengthen his relationship with him, and therefore, in the long run, strengthen their relationship with each other. Strengthen their marriage.

He wasn't trying to toy with it or play games with it. But when ultimately I can trust God completely in my life, and then he puts me into a thing, and many times I'll miscommunicate in my marriage, but when I've already learned I trust him first, no matter what, and he's put me into this, and even when I'm not maybe doing temporarily well in a marriage, I still am rock solid because I first learned to speak with him, and he may not always confirm things the way I want with everyone else. And here, God was raising Joseph.

He was raising Mary, and then he was raising them there together. But he was there all the time, even in the midst of the confusion when maybe Mary thought, Lord, why, what's going wrong, the pain? Joseph doesn't hear. He can't.

God, won't you please tell him? Where's the angel when you need one? You know, sort of a thing. And why don't you go, and why don't you talk to him? I'm sure she had to have all of these feelings, all of these struggles. But yet there is, she had to learn to put the Lord first.

Joseph had to learn it. And then they had to learn it in their own marriage. When they went there, they protected their marriage.

They got into Bethlehem and say, you know, we're not going to cast our pearls before swine. We're not going to, if they're not ready to hear it, let's not add to the turmoil. They also not only learned what it was to trust the Lord in their own heart and what it was to trust him with each other, to be able to give them to God and say, Lord, they're yours.

Mary had to do that with Joseph. You take him. And Joseph had to do it with Mary.

And they had to, how will we do it? And they, you know, had that struggle to learn like every marriage. But they also learned what it was to submit to him and to each other. It's something there that here, one of the things about Joseph and Mary is just the issue of submission.

Not only just trust, but practically speaking, submission. First Corinthians 11.3 tells us about roles in relationship. God has designed them.

And you may not like them. You may like them, whatever, but they're there. In First Corinthians 11.3, Paul writes, and he says, Brother, I wouldn't have you ignorant, that the head of every woman is man, the head

of man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God.

He used to set up an order of authority and of leadership. And he honored it as well, even in Joseph and Mary's relationship. In their marriage as well, God honored it.

It would have been quite easy, I think, for Joseph and Mary, or at least for Mary, you know, after this, to have kind of a mother of God type of complex. You know, sort of a thing in the relationship there to where any time Joseph, after this initial thing, when Joseph finally did hear and came over to him and said, Yes, Mary, you're right, and the angel came and spoke to me, and I don't know what to say. You were telling me the truth all along, but here I am.

Let's pick up and move on. It would have been very easy at that point, I think, for Mary just to decide from then on, you know, when Joseph would have come up with an idea, let's do this or let's do that, to kind of have her maybe look at her and say, Well, Joseph, let me think about this. Let me pray about this first.

I'll let you know. And if I feel, Joseph, that we're to do it, we'll do it. But we're not going to do it until I feel that way.

It would have been easy. I mean, when you stop to think of this relationship and with their previous experiences, you know, to have her just look and say, Wait a minute, Joseph, God speaks to me. I don't need to listen to you, pal.

And archangels speak to me, and they usually speak to me ahead of you, so you just sit and wait, and if he confirms what you're thinking, I'll let you know, but until then, we'll wait. But you know, the thing is, is they had to learn how much they needed each other. And I don't think a lot of marriages, and if you've been married long, you usually come to find this, and how opposites attract.

You're very different, but you need each other to balance and blend each other. I think Joseph and Mary were probably that type of couple. My home that I grew up in, my parents, they're two people.

They're unlikely in one sense, but likely because this is the way it commonly happens. But my dad, he's a guy that everybody that's ever gotten to know him at all, commonly, the word you'll hear associated with my dad is he's a rock. Just the association, Man, your daddy is such a rock.

And he is. He is Mr. Consistency. He's Mr. Unchangeableness.

You know, he's somebody that he, you know, he's like, what is that little Energizer Bunny? He just keeps, you know, he's just steady-eddy. He just kind of moves right on through life. Left to himself, he'd probably bore himself to death.

There's not much, you know what I mean? He just kind of goes through carrying on business at hand. And he's quite, you know, just kind of the rock. My mother, on the other hand, she's more like a helium balloon.

You know, I suppose if I was, I mean, she's one of those, I mean, you won't meet, you'll never meet a woman that loves the Lord more. Never. And you, at least I haven't.

She has no other interest in life. None. Other than the Lord.

In the kingdom of heaven. And her children, and her grandchildren, and her great-grandchildren. She's over the prayer ministry at Calvary Coast of Mesa.

God gave her, when I was a little kid, this gift of intercessory prayer, she spends four, five, six hours a day before God, and absolutely loves it. And that's a gift to do that. I don't care how spiritual you try to be.

Until God calls you and gives you this, it isn't there. And I don't feel guilty about not having it, because whoever has it, has it. If you don't, you don't.

But she does. And she's one of those, she just has a tremendous sensitivity about her. There's one there, she just loves to listen to God.

She loves to hear any faint spiritual voice and to just follow it, you know, type of a thing. She just reaches to the heavens in her spiritual heart and life. But she also, though, like a balloon, is blown by any wind.

She, through the years, I mean, is one that she can be up and down in any storm that's brewing. Oh, no! You know, and all this. She's all over the scale.

And without the two of them, you know, her balloon kind of gets this rock, but the rock keeps the balloon. They just have this wonderful thing that through the years, initially, they were in trouble. Initially, I mean, so often until you mature yourself as a person, and then you realize you need the other person to stay mature and to stay stable, you're in trouble.

And they struggled, like a lot of marriages do. But once they got that, once God brought them to that realization how much they needed each other and they honored each other for those roles, it was wonderful to see on how that they balanced each other, how they blended each other. And for Mary, I think she probably maybe had to learn that God speaks to Joseph too.

Maybe a little slower, and maybe a little later. And there's some scriptural basis for that, but it's something there to where He does speak to it. I think this is, I mention this because I think this is a great tension in most marriages.

Most marriages go through this, because I personally think women, and I don't, maybe, I don't know if it's sexist, I don't know, I'm not sure, but to me, women tend to be more spiritual than men. There's a sensitivity about them to spiritual issues. But I think men are more discerning.

That's just my own opinion. And more commonly, there's exceptions to all of that, but without each other, they need each other. And until they learn that, and then they can blend it together and honor each other, and then give each other the relationship and the role.

The interesting thing about this is that once God spoke to Joseph, once the angel came and spoke to him, and I don't want to make a case out of this at all, but I will, but it is there. When I stumbled across it, I as a man was quite delighted with this, but I don't want to preach it. Just mention it to you.

Once he did speak to Joseph, he never again spoke to Mary. Matthew chapter 2. I'm just giving you the Bible, folks, here. Matthew chapter 2, it tells us in verse 13, it says, Now when they departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother.

Flee to Egypt and stay there until I bring you word, for Herod will seek the young child and destroy him. So he arose and he took the child. Verse 19, But Herod, when he was dead, here another laid her date.

Behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, Arise, take the young child and his mother and go to the land of Israel for those who sought the young child's life are dead. Up he

goes. Verse 21, He arose, took the young child and his mother, and he came to the land of Israel.

Verse 22, Another time it says, But when he heard that Achilles was reigning over Judea, instead of Herod, he was afraid to go there and being warned by God in a dream, he turned aside to the region of Galilee, and he came and he dwelled in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled that which was spoken of by the prophets, he shall be called Nazarene. But here we have on three separate occasions, no record again, of the Lord directing their relationship in their marriage through her. I believe it's confirmed, but it is an interesting thing to have three times there to where here though she was the first and maybe the most spiritual and sensitive, it's something God had in order and he said, from then on, deliberately, it didn't tell us he spoke to them or he spoke to her and to him or something, each time he spoke to Joseph.

And it's something to where I probably shouldn't say any more about that, I'll just move on. But the thing is is that I think that when in a marriage, when people learn this, when they learn what it is to, and this is a great struggle, again because I think women are more sensitive. Women, there's something about the nature, and I can't make a case for it, I just see it.

I've just been around long enough to have seen it and the predominant thing is to say that there tends to be a greater hunger, a greater burden and desire, not to say that men are less spiritual in that sense, but there's a difference. And sensitivity oftentimes is more, in my opinion, women have a greater ability with it. But God is also, like he balances out and says, now, I want you to submit to this man that I've given to you.

And once that the voice is opened up to where she could listen to Joseph, because Joseph was now listening to God, on they went. And the Lord spoke through him. And directed the family.

One of the things that's interesting, that later on my mother, because I'll tell you, and she would tell you this, or I wouldn't, but she struggled a lot with my dad in the early years, because she came to Christ and was stronger in the Lord for a number of years. And she spent a lot of the marriage almost looking, in a sense, at her husband like he was just some sort of a stick in the mud. Why can't this guy get spiritual? She was trying to cart him off to every church or every service and finagle every sort of a thing for God to get hold of this man so this marriage could get about the business as she knew God wanted it to be.

And it wasn't until finally she just almost virtually just gave up on the man that God began to do a thing that was so powerful and so wonderful within my dad and to where then he became the spiritual head of the house. It wasn't as quick as she or I think most women would like, but it was and it happened. And when it did, then she watched all of her children who weren't that much interested when it was just her, but it was really something because of the stability that we saw in that home and the order.

I didn't understand it biblically at the time. I just knew that when I saw that order as I looked back on it, it was profound. And they watched all their children.

God put His hand on us and called us all to Himself. But it wasn't until she kind of gave up and said, God, You take care of the man. And then He did.

And did it wonderfully. And then interestingly enough, years later, she made an observation she told us about. And she said, You know, I've come to find, and she is quite an observer of people, she said that in the homes where the husband is the head of the house, the kids tend to turn out.

And if they don't take it, they don't as well. But at any rate, Joseph became obviously the head of the house. They learned submission.

And like every marriage, I think, was probably tested, so theirs was as well. They also, and quickly, with just in closing one other quick comment, because I didn't realize how late it was, but they had to learn selflessness. They had to learn selflessness.

For a marriage to succeed, it takes two people that they trust God, they submit to one another, they submit to Him, and they're also those selfless in the sense of their life. Here, Joseph, the thing is, as God begins to speak to him, He takes him there, and instead of just going, getting the taxation done, getting the issue done in Bethlehem, then getting back to his carpenter shop, and getting on with business, the next thing you know is that the angel comes and speaks to him, and he tells this nice Hebrew young boy, Go to Egypt and find work. Well, that was never easy in another world, in another culture, but he sent him down there, and he said, I'll take care of you.

And he had to give up his career for Jesus. He had to give up to see that relationship that he had with Christ, literally strength, and he had to be willing to lay everything down, and down he went to Egypt. And then there, from then on, it wasn't where life was convenient or best, it was, God, where do you want us? Then there the Lord spoke to him, Here's where I want you, here's where I want you.

He was fulfilling prophecy in his life as he let God speak to him and direct him. But he had to give up his own identity, and Mary did as well. It was something there, one of the things that hung with Mary the rest of her life is she was always a woman of questionable reputation.

It went on with her, you know, the story of Joseph not being the father, then who was? And for anyone who couldn't believe that it was God, of course, they only had one other alternative. One time you may remember when Jesus was having a little heated conversation with the Pharisees, that they said to him, We know where we came from, but you? We don't know where you came from. And it was a direct shot at the reputation of Mary and of their Jesus had traveled around with him that he was a bastard.

That his father wasn't Joseph, that was known already, but it also certainly wasn't as they would prefer it to be, that it was God. But rather than that, he was illegitimate. And it hung on Mary.

But at any rate for them, they had to learn these things, and then when they did learn them, life wasn't easy for them. Sometimes I think there's this illusion we have that if I learn everything, and if I do it all right, then everything is going to be fine. Well, it wasn't.

God still had an agenda. It's interesting. Joseph and Mary, I think, probably a wonderful and godly people.

But there as they raised their own children, if you can imagine, some people probably think what a wonderful thing it'd be to grow up in a home with Jesus in it. I don't think it was. I think it was for the right reasons, but not the way that most people think.

It was a tense home, like every home. It was one there, it tells us later on, one time in Matthew chapter 13, when Jesus came unto his own city, it said he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief. Because they looked at Jesus, and they said, wait a minute.

Who does this man think he is? Whence then has this man these things? And they said his brothers. Are they not with us? You know, James and Joseph and Judas, and his half-brothers they were. But they're all

there, and the sisters, they looked and here Jesus, they ended up, Joseph and Mary, after Jesus was born, they had a number of children of their own, and Jesus had a number of half-brothers and sisters, but they never believed, not till after the resurrection.

One time it tells us in John 7, that Jesus, he's going down, and they tell him, why don't you go down to the feast and do some great miracle, for no true prophet hides out. He goes to where the ministry really is, and then a little footnote, and it says, this they said, because even his brothers didn't believe in him. It was a tense home.

I mean, it was something, Joseph and Mary, Mary had to wait for God to speak to Joseph, and then Joseph and Mary together, they had to wait, and for the time that God would reveal, the same thing, it's only supernaturally. We think with our children, we tell them and tell them and tell them. Well, leading children to Christ, is no different than leading, than it was for Joseph and Mary.

You can tell them until you're blue in the face, but until Heaven tells them. Your children don't come to Christ, until Heaven breaks through. Until it's the time that God, by His Holy Spirit, you can say, well, I've taught them, and they believe, but they don't.

I mean, they understand, maybe, or they've heard, but until Heaven breaks open, and the skies break open, and the Spirit of God descends, and He calls them to Himself, your children don't come to Christ. They come in His day, in His hour, in His appointed time, of His working, and we hopefully, we can get the soil ready, and we can love them, and we can teach them, and we can provide a wonderful atmosphere, hopefully, for it, that's fertile ground for spiritual life, but that ensures nothing. Until the day, and as we just pray, God, You speak to them.

You get the children. And it wasn't until after the Resurrection, that then, finally, they believed, and became disciples of their older brother, half-brother. But there was tension, though.

Mary had lessons to go on learning all of her life. Blessed woman, she was such a sensitive woman, and a spiritual woman, but she had trouble with submission. She did.

Remember when Jesus was 12, they came to a city, and left, you know, and there they leave town, and as the whole kind of bandwagon going back, they look around, can't find Jesus. They go back in town looking for Him, find Him in the temple. They go and they rebuke Him.

What are you doing? What's going on? Jesus turned to Mary, and He turned to Joseph, and He says, Wouldn't you know I would be about my Father's business? Wouldn't you, two people of all people, aren't you two people, all you've been through, and all God has revealed to you, isn't it enough that you would know who I am, and the business I'd be about? Had to rebuke them. They probably, well, yeah, I guess so. But it would be an interesting relationship, wouldn't it? But the thing is, is that they had, she had to learn that.

She had to learn it several times. Remember when Jesus, in John 2 at the wedding feast, they ran out of wine, and Jesus, Mary goes, runs, Oh, Jesus, she goes to get Him to do this, and He turns to her, and she's trying to manipulate Him, and He says to her, He says, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Don't run my life. Precious, godly women, they're all, you know, one of the things that's wonderful about the sensitivity, they want to help even God out, and I guess, I mean, and bless her heart, you know, I mean, she had the boldness to run right in, as I think a lot of ladies do, to tell Jesus, Lord, here's exactly what

you've got to do here.

Here's what you've got to do with my children, here's what you've got to do with my husband, and we give them this little shopping list, and I think a lot of times we have to learn where He looks and says, Woman. One time later on, when Jesus is out preaching, you may remember the story, they interrupt the sermon, they come into a house, and they say, Jesus, your mother and your brother, they're outside, they want you home. And Jesus turns, and He says, Who is my mother and my brother? It had to do with the will of God.

Looked there, and, you know, and had to go, I mean, the guy went out there and said, You want to tell her, or shall I? You know, and they probably said, I don't know if I'd want to tell. She was probably a pretty strong lady. And, you know, for one to come in there and interrupt a message, or one to go tell him to do this, but she had to continuously learn.

You know her place. He had to keep putting her in it. And the only reason, I suppose, probably Joseph didn't have to learn the same things, is he doesn't appear in the scriptures after Jesus was twelve.

Probably died. but it's, of course, that's the assumption everybody has, and the tradition. But it's, in church history, but so therefore pretty authoritative, but something there to where Mary still had to learn the same things we all have to learn.

And in their marriage, I think when somebody gets some of these fundamental understandings in the marriage, many marriage tensions, they're over stuff that if we realize God, you must tell him. You must tell her. Many of the tensions in our home, in struggles that marriage have, we're sitting there with the kid, thinking we're going to get through to him.

We're sitting there, do you understand English? Of course they understand English, but they don't understand heaven. Until it comes from heaven. We can tell them about it, we can prepare them for it, but we must sit back and then say, now God, you, you, and rest in him in a marriage, realize how'd we find the Lord, how'd ourselves, what'd we have to learn in our own marriage? Had to give each other to God continuously.

We had to learn to submit to each other in everything. And then had to be selfless in our lives, and God had to do all that. Now we must let it happen in the rest of our family and loved ones around us.

And in his time, he'll do it. He'll do it. As we just give it to him.

Let him work. Father, we just thank you, dear Lord, for your word. The world doesn't teach us that.

Your word wants to strengthen every marriage, wants to strengthen our lives, wants to strengthen our homes. Lord, I pray that we would grow and grow spiritually. We grow in an understanding.

Many times we're exasperated with one another and it isn't honestly even their fault. We're convinced it is. We're convinced they're not listening.

But just like Joseph, heaven hasn't spoken to him yet. And in it, you're teaching us patience. You're teaching us something.

You're teaching a mother something or a wife something or a husband or a father or a married couple about their children or whatever it is. But God, as you're wanting to teach us, heaven must speak. And Lord, that when we are so confident that you who began a good work in us, you'll finish it.

You'll go through all of the chain of command in your work. But as we can just grow enough where we trust you fully to do it. We trust you with one another.

And then we can submit to one another and trust you to speak to the other and lead us through them. Though we're maybe used to hearing your voice and having it confirmed directly, but sometimes in life, like Joseph and Mary, for her just to be at peace to say, God will speak to you. And if you sense it, I'll go.

Lord, that you could just bring such submission and trust and selflessness within marriages, how strong they'd be. Lord, teach us these things that we may grow. May you bless every marriage, Lord, here in our church.

Every home, every family. That we grow in Christ, truly trusting you, realizing that you are the builder of the family. You're the one that must work.

So we just commit all these things, the study of your word tonight to you. In Jesus' name, amen.

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