

Joseph
Sunday
Week Three
Attend Sunday Gathering

Monday
Week Three

Read: Matthew 1v18-24

Engagement is a time of celebration, rejoicing, planning, and imagining the life ahead of you. It's marked by the joy of a ring on your finger, hours spent tasting desserts, and crafting guest lists. It's a season to dream—a time when expectations begin to take shape. Expectations of what your life will look like, how your marriage will unfold, and joy-filled milestones.

But if we're honest, life rarely unfolds according to our carefully laid plans. Reality sets in, often in ways we least expect, and those expectations can quickly crumble. Disappointment and disillusionment follow, leaving us grappling with a life that looks different than what we imagined.

Joseph knew this tension well. When we're introduced to him in the Christmas story, it's clear life is not going the way he had envisioned. We can imagine that Joseph dreamed of a simple, beautiful life with Mary—a life full of love, children, and stability, much like the life he may have seen modeled in his family. But those dreams were suddenly interrupted when he learned Mary was pregnant, and he knew the child was not his.

Joseph's response is honorable and kind. He decides to quietly leave Mary, sparing her public disgrace, perhaps intending to start his life over and find a new path that better aligns with his expectations. But as Joseph considers his next steps, an angel of the Lord appears to him, upending his plans yet again.

The angel says:

"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."

And just like that, Joseph's trajectory of his life is forever altered. The Christmas story simply states, "When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife." Such a small statement for such a big choice. It's easy to overlook the enormity of this moment. Joseph's obedience required immense trust and courage. He set aside his plans, his expectations, and likely even his reputation, to follow the plans of God. In doing so, he chose faith over fear and surrender over

control. His act of obedience not only changed the course of his life but also placed him at the center of God's redemptive story.

This part of the Christmas story is a powerful reminder that while our expectations may not align with God's plans, His plans are always better, even when they challenge us or look nothing like what we had hoped for. Like Joseph, we are invited to trust and obey, even when it feels like everything is falling apart.

Listen

A Stick, A Carrot & String - mewithoutYou

Reflection

What expectations have you had about your life, marriage, or future that haven't gone as planned?

How do you typically respond when life doesn't meet your expectations?

How might trusting God with your unmet expectations lead to a greater story than you could have imagined?

Tuesday
Week Three

Read: Luke 2v1-21

It's easy to look at Joseph's story from the outside—like a spectator peering in from above or from 2,000 years later—and think, “Well, that worked out pretty well for him.” We see the happy ending: Joseph becomes the earthly father of the Messiah. But when you step into Joseph's shoes, the story feels much different.

We don't know much about Joseph beyond the Christmas story. He's noticeably absent in the later accounts of Jesus' life. It's easy to let him remain a central figure in the nativity scene but a fleeting thought the rest of the year. Yet, like Elizabeth, Joseph has so much to teach us living in the advent season—living a life marked by trust even when the unexpected happens.

Joseph had plans. A bride-to-be and a future laid out ahead of him. But, as is often the case with Jesus, those plans were turned completely upside down. An angel appeared with a message that changed everything. And Joseph—hands open—trusted. Scripture doesn't show him arguing or resisting. He simply surrendered, even though it cost him everything. He let go of his expectations and trusted that God's plan was better. Joseph believed in the promise of the Messiah, and his faith paved the way for Jesus to rescue us all.

Unexpected. That's the theme of Christmas. Life took unexpected turns for Elizabeth and Zechariah, and for Mary and Joseph. And in the most unexpected way, Jesus came—disrupting plans, rewriting stories, and bringing salvation to the world. How easy it is for us, like Joseph, to cling to our own expectations. But Christmas reminds us to trust in the unexpected ways God works and to live with hope for the return of Christ.

Listen

I Surrender - Hillsong Worship

Reflection

*What does Joseph's story teach you about trusting God when life takes unexpected turns?
Are there areas of your life where God might be calling you to surrender your plans in
obedience to Him?*

What does it look like to hold your plans with open hands as Joseph did?

How can the hope of Jesus return help you trust in God's plan for your life?

Wednesday

Week Three

Listen to Midweek Podcast

Thursday
Week Three

Read: Isaiah 7v14, 9v6-7

The “now”—the face of Advent we prefer. The prophecy was fulfilled, and Jesus was born. The thick veil was torn. The wait was over. Those desperate for redemption found their longing fulfilled. Jesus had come, and life would never be the same. God had a plan, and He did exactly what He said He would. It looked nothing like anyone expected, but it was better than anyone dared to hope.

He came in the most humble way—a manger in Bethlehem. The Word became flesh. He lived in a human body, arriving as a baby, to show us the way to life with the Father. Joseph’s expectations for his life were upended with the news of a baby in his wife’s womb, yet that child changed everything.

There is hope because the long-awaited Messiah came.

And there is hope because the long-awaited Messiah will return—He will wipe away every tear.

But we live in the tension of the “now” and the “not yet.” We hold tightly to the promise of His return while also mourning that the day has not yet come. We yearn for Him to come quickly, yet we sit in the sorrow and pain that remain.

This is Advent. A season of waiting, of trusting, of placing all our expectations, dreams, and plans at the feet of Jesus. The “now” invites us to celebrate the access we have to Him, while the *not yet* stirs our hearts to cry,

Come, Jesus, come.

Listen

O Come, O Come Emmanuel - End of Death

Reflect

Do you have hope for Jesus' return? What ways are you living in that hope?

Friday

Week Three

There is hope in the coming Messiah. Today, reflect on the week, slow down and read this scripture several times throughout your day.

*When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dreamed.
Our mouths were filled with laughter,
our tongues with songs of joy.
Then it was said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”
The Lord has done great things for us,
and we are filled with joy.*

*Restore our fortunes Lord,
like streams in the Negev.
Those who sow with tears
will reap with songs of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
carrying seed to sow,
will return with songs of joy,
carrying sheaves with them.*

Psalm 126

Saturday
Week Three

You had a plan—a good one, a simple one. A bride-to-be, Mary, and a life ahead filled with work, a home of your own, and children to raise. It was the kind of life you dreamt your whole life of. But then, everything unraveled. Mary was pregnant, and you weren't the father.

Your heart broke. Confusion and hurt swirled inside you, but you chose to hold on to kindness. Quietly ending the engagement seemed like the only way forward. Let her go, keep her dignity intact, and try to rebuild the life you'd imagined. That felt like the plan you could control.

But then came the dream. An angel spoke into the chaos: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The child she carries is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins."

God's plan came crashing into yours. It didn't just cost you your future; it cost you your expectations and your sense of control.

But you trusted. Hands open, you laid your plans down and stepped into the unknown. It just felt like the right thing to do. You took Mary as your wife, you stood by her side in a stable as she gave birth to the Messiah. You held that baby in your arms, knowing He wasn't just your son but the hope of the entire world. The weight of him was more than I could grasp.

And it didn't stop there. God asked more. Protect this child. Flee to Egypt. Leave behind the life you worked so hard to build. Follow where I lead, even when it's hard, even when it makes no sense. And you did. You gave up your plans for the life God had written. A plan greater than your own.

This is your story but really this is the story of God.

Reflect

What similarities do you see between Joseph's story and your story?

What is God revealing to you through the story and life of Joseph?

How does it feel to hold the two faces of Advent? The joy of the now and the pain of the not yet?