

Joseph: Forgotten Hero

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[0 : 00] And if I had to give the message a title this morning, it would be Joseph the Forgotten Hero or another title that might be appropriate as well, Looking for a Husband. How many of you are looking for a husband right now?

You don't need to raise your hand. I'm just teasing. But there may be some young ladies here who are, and some of you are perhaps parents and grandparents, and you're looking ahead and wondering what kind of guy your daughter, your granddaughter, is one day going to marry.

And so I want to give you some information you might find useful down the way as you try to instruct them. In fact, let me just give you a quick word of pastoral advice. Don't wait until they bring somebody home and say, well, now, he doesn't meet this qualification.

You know, give them the qualifications before they go searching, right? And then that way you won't have those kind of contradictions later on in life. A lot of heroes, the best heroes in life, it seems to me, are often folk who are overlooked.

We don't know they're heroes in the moment. And oftentimes it's because of the kind of traits they have in their life that just kind of make them blend into the fabric of the scene, and we don't see them much.

[1 : 10] I know all of you in this room have been to Christmas plays about the nativity, right? Joseph is the part that everybody wants because Joseph is a non-speaking role.

He just has to stand there and look pretty, right? He stands there over Mary's shoulder and he looks down at the baby Jesus. But the truth of the matter is, Joseph, by every possible definition, is a real, real, real hero.

And we're going to look at him this morning, and that's what is going to lead us in the second half of the message, where we talk about how do you become the kind of daddy that you need to be? How do you become the kind of husband, the kind of father, the kind of grandfather you want to be?

Well, look at Joseph, because he's a good example. If you're looking for a husband, if you're approaching it from that perspective, look for a guy like Joseph. And I want to show you why, because a lot of folk, I think, just completely overlook this character, Joseph.

I'm going to tell you this morning, everything about Joseph, it's possible to know. Not because I'm smart, but because there are just limited verses that talk about Joseph, right? So if you have your Bibles, get ready to open them to Matthew chapter 1.

[2 : 22] Before you even do that or while you're doing that, I'm going to tell you one quick thing about Joseph. You don't even need to look up. It's found in Matthew chapter 13 and verse 35.

You don't need to go there, but here's what it says, that Joseph was a carpenter. It gives us two pieces of information. He's a carpenter, and he's a man who lives in Nazareth, right?

We've talked about Nazareth before. It's also the home of Mary. It's a sleepy little town not far from Capernaum. It's in the Galilean region near the Sea of Galilee, and that's what we know from Matthew 13, 35.

He's a carpenter, and he's from Nazareth. Well, look at the second passage. There are three passages. The second passage is Matthew chapter 1 and verse 18 and following.

And so if you have your Bibles, let's look to Matthew chapter 1, and we're going to read beginning in verse 18. The birth of Jesus came about this way. After his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

[3 : 28] So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly. But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what she has been conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit.

She will give birth to a son, and you're to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet.

See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Emmanuel, which is translated, God is with us. When Joseph got up from sleeping, he did as the Lord's angel had commanded.

He married her, but did not know her intimately until she gave birth to a son, and he named him Jesus. Now, if you will, look down to chapter 2.

This is the second passage about Joseph. Chapter 2, verse 13 through verse 15. After they were gone, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream.

[4 : 42] Now, this is following his birth. It's following the visitation of the wise men. They come, and they present gifts, and they go their way. After they were gone, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, Get up, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you.

For Herod is about to search for the child to destroy him. So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night, and escaped to Egypt. He stayed there until Herod's death, so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled out of Egypt.

I called my son. Now, one last passage, and we're done with our reading. Go with me to Luke. Luke's Gospel, chapter 2 and verse 1.

I'm going to give you a chance to turn there before I read. Luke chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 7. Last thing we know about Joseph. In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered.

This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

[6 : 00] And Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of Nazareth, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family line of David, to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. Then she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him snugly in cloth and laid him in a feeding trough, because there was no room for them in the inn.

I want to share with you this morning five things we learned from these three passages of Scripture that we've read this morning about Joseph. And then we're going to take that and see what we can learn from what these passages tell us.

The first thing I'd tell you about Joseph, the obvious thing that we said at the very outset of the message, Joseph is a carpenter. Now, I don't know if we've got any carpenters in the room or not.

We probably have some fellows here who work with wood. We may have some who are professional carpenters. But I can tell you honestly, I've always had a deep admiration for two different type skill sets.

[7 : 09] Those are carpenters and those are mechanics. Because you're looking at somebody who doesn't have any of those gifts, right? I always wished I could have been a carpenter or knew something about mechanical things, but I'm just not wired that way.

I'm going to tell you something. I have great, great admiration for those folk because in my mind, they really and truly, at the end of the day, they're artists. They're more than just craftsmen.

They're more than just guys who've learned a trade. They're actually artists. Artists. How many of you have drawn, you take something and you look at a picture over here and you try to draw what you've seen on a sheet of paper?

Everybody in this room has done it one time or another, right? I can do that okay. I can look at a scene. If it's not a real complicated scene, I can pretty much take another sheet of paper and as long as I've got it right there beside me, I can do that.

If it comes to shadowing, like faces or portraits, I just can't do that at all. But if it's a scene, some type of scene of a country scene or a building, I can look at that and I can fairly well sketch what I see on that paper.

[8 : 13] You know why? It takes no imagination at all. It just takes a little bit of ability to look at this and then to put it in proportion over here on this sheet of the paper. But with artists, I don't know if you've ever thought about this.

Many of you have and already know this. Some of you are artists. Artists don't work that way. Artists see in their mind what they're going to do before they ever put it on a canvas or before they ever put it on a sheet of paper.

They envision it, right? Because they see it. And that's the way it is with carpenters. Carpenters can look at a space and you tell them what you want to build and you describe it a little bit to them and it comes alive in their mind.

Now, me, all I can do is cut boards. You want a board five foot long? I cut your board five foot long. But I'm not an artist. I can't do that. That takes a real craftsman. Same way with mechanics.

When I was a kid, they didn't have all this diagnostic equipment. When you went in with your car and it needed to be repaired when I was a boy, this will date me, right? Some of you young ones here. You know what they used to say, Brian, when you walked in with your car?

[9 : 18] They didn't have all that diagnostic equipment. They'd say, what's wrong with it? And you'd say, well, I don't know. That's why I'm bringing it to you. And they'd say, well, what noise is it making? And you'd try to make that noise. And if you couldn't imitate that noise, he'd crank it and listen to it.

And if he couldn't tell, he'd drive it down the road and come back and say, well, here's what's wrong with it. Because they were artists. They understood. They could see things that the average guy can't see, right?

So this is an incredibly smart man. A lot of carpenters, most of them don't have PhDs. A lot of them don't have college education. But they're gifted guys. They're insightful guys.

They're artists. They're smart. They're good with their hands. Joseph was a carpenter. Second thing I know about Joseph is this. Joseph is engaged to be married to Mary.

Remember what we said last week when we were talking about Mary? Mary and about engagement to Mary. Mary, engagement then wasn't like engagement today. You recall I told you last week if you were here, a guy drops to one knee.

[10 : 17] He says, will you marry me? She says, yes. He puts a diamond on her hand, right? They might be engaged two weeks. They might be engaged six months. They might be engaged five years sometimes.

Long engagements. In that day and time, engagements lasted one year. When you came to place, your family picked out the one they wanted you to marry, and you agreed, it was all arranged, and it was a formal legal binding contract.

That's the reason the Scripture says when he had in mind to put her away, he knew he was going to have to divorce her. Today, you just give the ring back, right? You just don't show up at the church on the wedding day, right?

And the wedding is off. But in that day and time, it was a big deal. You had to legally divorce them to put them away and out of your life and to move on in another direction.

So Joseph is engaged to be married. Now, for some of you, it's been a long time. For me, 49 years. This June will be 50 years for me and Regina. Can I tell you something?

[11 : 20] I can remember, even though it's been 49 and a half years, how excited I was the day I gave her that ring. I can remember seeing her come down the aisle and just getting giddy, you know.

She looked so beautiful. She came down the aisle. It's exciting to be engaged, isn't it? I've got a daughter of 47. She's 47 years old today. She's getting married in less than a month.

Boy, you're talking about excited. She's excited. We're excited. She's off my taxes. I don't have to go blow her leaves anymore. Joseph was excited.

Man, he was excited. And yet, he finds out that she is pregnant. That's the third thing I want you to see. Before they come together, Joseph discovers, chapter 1, verse 18, that Mary is expecting a baby.

She's pregnant. Now, how did that come about? The Bible doesn't tell us. But you can use a little bit of common sense and figure it out. The angel Gabriel comes to Mary and he says to Mary, Mary, you're going to have a baby.

[12 : 24] She's trying to take all that in. He says, the Holy Spirit's going to overshadow you. I know you've never been with a man, but the Holy Spirit's going to overshadow you and you're going to be pregnant with this baby. He knows her mind's blown.

He says, let me tell you something that will help confirm this for you. Your relative, Elizabeth, who doesn't live here. She lives not too far from here. She's expecting right now.

She's in her sixth month of pregnancy. As soon as this conversation's over, the next morning, Mary gets up and goes to see Elizabeth. When she knocks at the door, here comes Elizabeth, this old woman.

She opens the door and behold, she's pregnant. Mary can't believe it. She knows now what the angel has said is going to come to pass. I think she goes back to Nazareth and probably, I can't confirm this, don't have any way of knowing this, but probably within a few hours, a few days, no doubt, at least within a few weeks, she goes to Joseph and says, Joseph, we need to have a conversation.

I don't know how to tell you this, but I'm going to have a baby. Now, this is a woman he's legally engaged to. In fact, he's literally married to her. They're just not living together.

[13 : 35] I'm going to have a baby, right? That's the news she breaks to Joseph. So here's the big question. How do you think he took that?

How do you think any man in this room would take it if your fiancé came to you and said to you, I'm going to have a baby? And listen, she says something else.

I'm going to have a baby, and this baby, you know it's not yours, and I know it's not yours because you and I know we've not been together. This baby is a miracle baby. This baby is a baby that God has placed within me, and I don't understand all that, but the angel told me the Holy Spirit of God had placed this baby within me.

Does he believe her? We can't judge him because we don't know, right? We can speculate, but we don't know. But I'll tell you the one thing I do know.

Joseph knows it's not mine because he hasn't been with Mary. The town doesn't know that. His parents don't know that. Her parents don't know that.

[14 : 44] Nobody knows that except Mary and Joseph, but Joseph knows that. He knows whoever's baby it is, it's not my baby, right? He has to deal with this question that no doubt is in his mind, forefront of his mind.

I want to believe Mary. I trust Mary. She's a good girl. I haven't seen anything that would suggest to me this could be anybody else's baby but the Holy Spirit's baby. But in the history of the world, no one has ever become pregnant without a man and a woman being together sexually.

You understand that? So he's trying to sort all this out and get in his head what's going on.

How do you think he's feeling? Well, if he believes her, and he very well may have. I'm not going to judge him. He very well may have believed everything that came out of her mouth.

And if he did, he's minimally bewildered. What in the world do you make of this? And even if he believes her, and if he's just bewildered, and if he believes it's true what she says, he still wants out.

[16 : 02] Because we read further that, as you're going to see in just a minute, he has in mind to quietly divorce her. So he wants out. He just knows, this is just not for me.

It's just not what I want. It's not the pathway I want to follow. Probably people are telling him that's what he ought to do. But if he doesn't believe her, if he thinks to himself, I'm not going to belittle you, I'm not going to say anything negative to you, but I'm just trying to get my head around this, and maybe what you say just doesn't make sense.

Have you ever had anybody come to you and try to convince you of something that you just thought to yourself, that just can't be? Anybody here ever had that happen? I have. I've had folk look me dead in the face and tell me something, and they just believe with all their heart, or they believe it as though they believe with all their heart.

And I'm sitting there, you know, trying to smile, but thinking to myself, that cannot be. That just can. That just defies everything. I understand. That cannot be.

So if that's the case and he doesn't believe her, I'll tell you, he's dealing with some other emotions too, not just bewilderment and puzzlement. He's dealing with some anger. He's dealing with some embarrassment, isn't he?

[17 : 12] Because he knows as well as you and I know what everybody else in Nazareth thinking. He knows what Mary's parents are thinking. He knows what his parents are thinking. He knows what his buddies are thinking.

He knows what those guys who know him, who don't particularly like him, have not only thought, but they've maybe said to him. He knows the shame he feels because of those things that people are saying, right?

So how does he initially react? Well, that's the fourth thing I want you to see. Joseph demonstrates incredible self-control. You see, it's one thing to feel something.

I want every man in this room to get this, and women. It's one thing to feel something. It's something else to act on how you feel. So he's got all these feelings. But how does he respond?

This remarkable thing about Joseph. There are no accusations, no knee-jerk reactions, no assumptions, no name-calling, no vengeance.

[18 : 19] In fact, the Bible tells us because he's a righteous man, he has it in his mind, whether he believes or not, to put her away quietly, to quietly divorce her. He's going to go down and he's going to fill out the legal papers so that they can go their separate ways.

But he's not going to do probably what most young men would have done, taking her to court and said she needs to be stoned to death. He doesn't want that. There's not a spiteful, vengeful thing he does.

But I'm going to tell you something. You've got to like this guy Joseph, don't you? I mean, I can't imagine what he's feeling, and yet no knee-jerk reaction, no accusations, no name-calling, no vengeance.

Here's what he does. He decides to quietly divorce her because he knows, whosever baby this is, it isn't my baby. I want you to see a final fifth thing about Joseph.

Joseph, after he has this dream, everything immediately changes. He has this conversation. He feels what he feels.

[19 : 24] He doesn't overreact. He doesn't act in a knee-jerk fashion. He sits down and he contemplates, and he comes to this conclusion. You know what? She's a good girl. I don't know what happened here. I've just got to separate myself from him.

Don't you imagine his folks were telling him to do that as well? Joseph, even if you believe this cockamamie story, you just don't need to be a part of this. Don't hurt her, but just put distance between you and her.

And that night, an angel of God appears to him in a dream, and this is what he says. Joseph, everything that Mary told you is true. This baby is of the Holy Spirit of God.

You need to go marry her. And you know what? The next morning, without wavering, the next morning, he gets up and he says, deal still on. And he takes her as his wife.

Wow. He's all in. Now, what insights can we draw from this story that will help those of us here who are dads or want to be dads one day to be better dads and better husbands?

[20 : 30] And what insight is there for young women looking for a husband? What kind of things do you need to look for in choosing somebody? And if you're a parent and you're trying to influence your daughter or your granddaughter in a positive way, what kind of things should be important?

Because I want to tell you something. A whole lot of times, the qualities that people think are important in looking for a spouse are not really the important qualities at all. So many folk I know who are out there looking for a spouse, even for their daughter, for their granddaughter, or a young lady looking for a husband, they think, boy, I need somebody who's really got a great education.

I need somebody who's really a good breadwinner. I need somebody who is really popular or really good looking. Or I need somebody who is this or that or the other.

And a lot of times, we overlook the things that those of us who've been married a long time, we've come to recognize, boy, that's what's really, really important. Let me tell you what those things are.

First of all, he was an humble man. You say, how do you know that? Never says he's humble. Never uses that word of him. I'll tell you something. Here's how I know he's a humble man.

[21 : 42] A proud man doesn't marry Mary. You got that? You've seen proud men, peacocks, right? They're not marrying a Mary because they think you're damaged goods.

Boy, you've got a reputation. You're not hanging that. I'm not going through this public disgrace and shame on your account because you know what? A proud person is concerned about how people look at them.

An humble man is concerned about who he is and about how God sees him. Did you hear that? An humble man is not so concerned about what you think or what somebody else thinks or what their neighbors think or their cronies think or their buddies think.

An humble man is concerned about this, who he really is because he knows who he really is. He's concerned about who am I really. When I look in the mirror, what do I say?

Am I who I say I am? And what does God think of me? He was an humble man. An humble man. Secondly, he wasn't a hothead who rushed to judgment.

[22 : 53] I'll tell you, that's one of the most impressive things I see in Joseph. Being a pastor and doing pastoral counseling for many, many, many years. It's amazing how many of us, when we get bad news, when somebody hurts us, when somebody injures us, when we feel slighted.

Isn't it amazing how oftentimes, well, we want to strike out and we want to hurt folks. We do it with our mouth. Sometimes there's physical abuse that's involved.

But a whole lot of times, as we get older, we stop using our fist to wage war against our neighbor. And we begin to use our tongue. And I want to tell you something. Boy, when you use your tongue as a weapon of destruction, it leaves lasting hurts that never heal, doesn't it?

I'm going to tell you something. You can do far more damage with what you say to somebody than what you actually do to somebody. Black eyes heal, bloody noses, they dry up. But I'm going to tell you something.

You can injure somebody for life with the words that you say. Some of you right now are carrying scars from your childhood because somebody unwittingly, maybe even a mom or a dad, said something that you've never got over.

[24 : 07] You've carried that with you all of your life. This was a man who wasn't hot-headed. He was a man who was slow to reach an opinion, a man who kept his emotions under control.

I meet a lot of girls through the years who've told me when they came in for premarital counseling, I ask them, what you're looking for in a husband? And you quickly get the idea what they're looking for is that guy who's a playboy type.

He's just a good-looking guy. He's adventuresome. He's exciting. You know, when I was coming along, the word for that was he's a bad boy, right?

A lot of girls out here are looking for a bad boy. But I want to tell you something. A lot of parents I know caution girls, don't marry that bad boy. He'll abuse you. And I can't tell you how many times I've heard girls say this.

No, you see, he treats other people that way, but he won't treat me that way. I'm going to change him. I'm going to change him, right? Girls, men marry reality.

[25 : 13] They take a look at their mama and say that's what she's going to be 20 years down the road. But girls, they marry potential. They think to themselves, if I'm his wife, I can turn him into this.

I'm going to tell you something. He is what he is. Do you know that? And if he treats other folk badly now, if he's mean to his mother and his daddy and his brothers and his sisters and his friends, and he barks at them and yells at them, and he's got a hot head, and he just flies off the handle of other people, you mark this down.

You remember this old preacher who told you this. The time's going to come, you're going to be in his line of fire. And the same thing he does to those other folk, he's going to do to you. Joseph was a man with a cool temper who kept his emotions under control.

Here's the third thing I see about Joseph. He was a man of compassion. A man of compassion. Even in his disappointment, he had compassion for Mary, and he didn't want to embarrass her.

He wanted to put her away quietly. Finally, find somebody. I know in life, because we watch so much television, we get this idea. What I need is somebody who is really adventuresome, who can make my life exciting.

[26 : 26] You know what you really want at the end of the day? You want somebody who will be good to you and be compassionate and treat you kindly. I'll promise you, marry somebody who is kind over somebody who is adventuresome.

Doesn't mean you can't be both, but find somebody who is kind and somebody who is compassionate. Fourth thing I want you to see is this. Joseph was a man who did his best to make his family feel safe and secure.

And let me tell you how I arrived at that conclusion. When he gets to Bethlehem, the Bible tells us the city is crowded because people are coming there to pay their taxes.

And there's no room for them in the end. And so they end up giving birth in a stable. Well, it goes without saying the only reason they knew there was no room in the end, somebody had to go and ask, do you have a room?

And my guess is that was Joseph. I can see Joseph knocking at that innkeeper's door and saying, sir, my wife is out here on this donkey and she's about to give birth. And could you help us out?

[27 : 29] We need a room badly. I'm sorry, son. Every room is taken. Man, I've got to find a place. The innkeeper says, well, I've got this livery stable out here.

It's not the best place in the world to give birth, but it's better than being out in the open. And Joseph says, I'll take it. It's not much, but I'm going to tell you something. It's out of the weather.

It's out of the elements. And Joseph is doing what any good husband should do. And here's what that is. Listen, ladies. It's to do the best you can under the circumstances in which you find yourself.

And I tell you my experience as a pastor and as a man has been this. Most women are satisfied with that. Most women don't have this mentality. I've got to live in the fanciest house in Pickens.

What they want is to know that somebody cares about them and loves them and is trying to make them secure and being a protector of them and their family. And that's what Joseph does.

[28 : 26] And so she gives birth. They find a place. Several months later, these wise men come to visit. And as they're leaving, they're leaving their gifts with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

That night when he goes to bed, an angel of the Lord speaks to Joseph and he says, Joseph, it's not safe here any longer. Herod is finding out. He's searching right now to find this baby.

And when he finds it, he's going to put it to death. You need to flee and go to Egypt. Now, think about it. Those of you who are in business. You want to go start another business in a place where nobody knows you?

You want to go back to Nazareth, don't you? I mean, that's where his business is. But he has listened to this angel of the Lord and he knows if I go back to Nazareth, Jesus is in jeopardy.

Mary's in jeopardy. And so you know what he does? Instead of heading back north to Galilee, he heads south. And listen to this. I don't know if you've ever thought about this or not. He goes to another continent.

[29 : 28] He's in what we think of as Israel now. But he's going to Africa to the nation of Egypt. And there he's going to remain for a number of months until finally the angel of the Lord comes and tells him, It's safe.

Herod's dead. You can go back home. You know why he does that? Because he's trying to be protective for his family. I want to tell you something, young ladies. If you're looking for a husband, if you, ladies and gentlemen, are trying to advise your children and grandchildren about what to look for in a spouse, tell them to find somebody who will be a protector, somebody who will make them feel secure, somebody who will make them feel safe, somebody who will always put their interests first in life.

And that's what Joseph does. Joseph cares for Mary and demonstrates that by the way he treated her. However, don't ever come to a place where your families question, gentlemen, whether or not you have their best interest at heart.

When I was much, much younger, I was pastoring in Statesville, North Carolina, and it was the Saturday before Mother's Day on Sunday. And I'd waited too long to get a gift. I went over to Belk's in Statesville, and I'm looking for a gift, and I find a gift for my wife, and I'm taking it home and getting it wrapped.

And I look across the way, and about 100, 150 feet away from me in that same store, there's a guy who goes to church with me, and I know. And he's a good man. I don't mean to disparage his character. He's a good guy, good guy.

[30 : 54] Got two little boys, one about five and one about seven, and they're with him. They're helping him shop for a gift for his wife. I look up, and I see him over there. And so after I get my gift wrapped, I'm thinking, I'm going to go over there.

They haven't seen me. I'm going to go over there, and I'm going to speak to them and just say hello, find out how they're doing. So I start walking over there, and about halfway over there, I notice the boys are just being boys.

They're just running around and acting silly like little boys do. And this guy is trying to look at something on the counter there, the lady showing him. And at some point, he just gets mad, and he loses it.

And this is exactly how it went down. He turns to those little boys, and he goes, stop it. I said, stop it right now. Stop it. And those two little boys, when he turns to his right, and there they are.

You know what they both do? Both those little boys, I've never forgotten this. It's been probably 30 years ago. When he turns to both those boys, they react this way. They go. They throw their hands up in front of their face.

[31 : 55] They put their head down, and they just throw their hands. You know what that said to me? It said, those boys are scared of their daddy. They're afraid of their daddy.

Now, I know all parents get on kids, and sometimes we overreact. But I'm going to tell you something. You want your children to grow up loving you and honoring you and respecting you and obeying you, and you have to discipline them at times.

The last thing you ever want is for your wife or your kids to be afraid of you. And those two little boys were afraid of their daddy. Do you need daddies here this morning?

You've got kids that are afraid of you? It's not that they just respect you, but they're afraid of you. Boy, if you're looking for a husband, look for somebody who makes you feel safe.

Look for somebody who makes you feel secure. Here's the last thing, and I close. Joseph was a man who was sensitive to what God wanted him to do and was committed to obeying him.

[33 : 00] Joseph, as we said several times this morning, hear this. He wants out. He's going to put her away. But the angel of the Lord says it's safe to marry her. And when the angel of the Lord says that, guess what?

The next morning, he acts on that. This man who's going from a position of, I want out, when he hears God speak through that angel in a dream, now he's all in.

I mean, he's all in. You know why? Because he's not wanting what he wants. He wants what God wants. He wants what God wants. He's listening for the voice of God, even above the voice of his parents, even above the voice of his friends, even above the voice of conventional wisdom.

He's listening for the voice of God. And that's what you want in a husband. I close by telling you this. Through the years, typically, when a girl in the church I pastored wanted to be married, she would come see me, especially if the boy wasn't part of our church, part of another church somewhere.

She would typically come see me before she brought her fiancé. And the conversation would usually go like this. Pastor, I found this guy, and we're getting married. I wonder, would you do the wedding?

[34 : 16] When is the wedding? We'd put it, look at the calendar, see if it was open. And then I'd say something like this. Well, tell me about him. And she began to tell me about him. And if she didn't answer this question, then I'd ask her pointedly, is he a believer?

Is he a Christian? And the three answers I always got, they fell in one of these three categories almost all the time. One was, oh, yes, Pastor, you'll love him. He's a man of God.

He's active in his church at such and such place. He loves the Lord. We have Bible study together. We're praying together. That was always the answer you wanted to hear. But the answer I got a lot of times was this.

Well, Pastor, you know, it's kind of an unusual thing. He was saved when he was seven or eight or nine or ten or twelve, and they baptized him.

And he's a member of such and such church, but he didn't go to church anymore. He didn't go to church anymore. He's real busy, you know, and he just didn't go to church anymore. Would you all pray together? Well, no, no, we don't ever pray together.

[35 : 15] What do you have? Study the Scripture together? No. You talk about things we've got? No. But he says he's a believer. He says he's a believer. And then the third response I'd get was this.

And this is surprising how many times I hear this. You know, I'm not sure. I was hoping you could talk to him about that. You know, I don't really know. It's never come up.

Really? It never came up? Can I tell you something? Those last two answers are unacceptable answers. Because in the last instance, if it's never come up and you've dated him long enough, you want to be engaged to him?

Well, I can answer that one for you. He's not. He's just not. I don't say that disparagingly to beat up on him or anything or to be judgmental. I'm just telling you, I don't ever go a day in my life that sometimes the name Jesus doesn't come up in the course of a day.

I can't imagine that you could date somebody for months and months and months and months and months and Jesus' name just never enter into the conversation. That a Christian value wouldn't enter into the conversation at some point.

[36 : 22] So I can answer that one for you. He's not a believer. Or you'd know it by now. But the other thing is this. It appalls me how many girls, so long as they can just, in their mind, because they've heard their parents say this and their grandparents say this, marry a Christian, so long as they can check that little Christian box, you're good to go.

And I'm telling you something, ladies and gentlemen, you're not. You're not good to go. Don't settle for somebody who just, they check the box. Find you a man or a woman in marriage who not only is a believer, but they have a deep-seated desire to listen for the voice of God and whatever it is God wants them to do with their life, that's what they're going to do.

Does it mean they follow that perfectly all the time? Make all right to know. They're sinners like everybody else. But they have a hunger to know what God wants them to do. And when they know what God does, they walk in that direction.

That's what I like about Joseph. Joseph said, uh-uh, I'm out of here. Until God speaks and says, Joseph, marry her. And immediately Joseph says, okay, God, I know a folk are going to laugh, but I'm all in.

Whose voice are you listening to this morning? Whose voice are you sensitive to? Because I want to tell you, a lot of people I meet, they care more about what the world says and what seems right in their eyes than what God's saying to them.

[37 : 48] Is there a decision this morning you're struggling with where you, here's what God's saying and here's what the world's telling you, here's what your mind tells you, here's what conventional wisdom says? Choose the voice of God.

Let's bow together in prayer. Father, I pray this morning that you would lead us and guide us as we come this time of decision. Lord, I never want to just speak so that people hear a message and they go away saying, oh, that was interesting or amusing.

I want it to make a difference in people's lives. And so, Lord, if there's some point, and I don't know where that would be, at some point in the message this morning, if you spoke someone's heart about something, I pray right now they'd do business with you.

Lord, that they would seek to know what you want in their lives, whatever it may be. Thank you, this wonderful man, Joseph. Thank you, Lord, that he was a stepfather to our Savior.

Lord, I pray today that you would help us as men in this congregation to want to emulate the qualities we see in him. Have your will and way in our lives right now.

[38 : 53] It's our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.