

3

Group Guide

Joseph: A Changing Plan

December 17, 2023

Main Passage: Matthew 1:18-25

Theological Theme

God's ways and plans are higher than ours. When faced with His instructions or opportunities, we must choose whether we will trust and obey or push our own agendas forward.

Introduction

- ❓ What kind of time manager are you? How do you typically respond when your plans get interrupted?
- ❓ What does the way you handle your schedule and plans indicate about the amount of trust you put in God each day?

1. Startling News (Matthew 1:18-19)

Matthew's description of the birth of Jesus Christ gives us more context surrounding Jesus's birth and those who were included in God's plan. In this passage, we are given insight into the perspective of Joseph, the man chosen to be the earthly father of Jesus. Matthew confirms the virgin conception without as many details about the angelic announcement to Mary as Luke included.

- ❓ Why do you think it is helpful to look at the birth of Christ from other perspectives in addition to Mary's? What are some additional perspectives on the birth of Jesus that the Bible gives outside of Mary and Joseph?
- ❓ What are some of the more likely or common responses Joseph could have had to finding out his betrothed was expecting? How would some of these reactions have been justifiable?
- ❓ Application: What situation are you facing where you have been tempted to react according to your flesh but should possibly follow the example of Joseph and seek the best for the other person?

2. Change of Plans (Matthew 1:20-21)

As Joseph planned how to handle the situation with his pregnant fiancée, he had a dream that changed everything. We know it was on his mind because the Bible says that while he was thinking about these things

an angel appeared to him in a dream. This was slightly different from the angelic appearance Mary experienced but was still to be taken seriously. Joseph was troubled about what was happening and maybe even about the plans he had made, then he heard from an angel in a dream.

- ① What happens to you when you are dealing with a situation that troubles you and won't let your mind rest? Where do you typically turn for comfort? Why?
- ① What are some different ways Joseph could have responded to the angel's message? How do you most often respond when you hear from God?
- ① Application: When have your plans been disrupted and you had to choose whether to push for your own agenda or trust and obey what God said? What makes it difficult to let go of our plans and trust God in these moments?

3. Prophecy Fulfilled (Matthew 1:22-25)

Just as we often do, Joseph had to choose whether he would trust and obey what God said. Matthew quoted Isaiah 7:14 to make clear that prophecy was being fulfilled by what was happening in Joseph's life. These events were the fulfillment of God's promises from many years before.

- ① Why is it important that Joseph immediately obeyed without wavering or doubting? Where is God calling you to obedience today?
- ① Why is it important to recognize that Joseph was fully obedient to the things God called him to do? Where is God calling you to display full obedience that you might have only responded to in part?
- ① Application: What is God calling you to rethink the plans you've made for yourself? How will you respond?

Conclusion

- ① When was a time God interrupted your plans? How did you respond?
- ① How can we as a group encourage one another to respond to God in obedience, even when it's difficult?
- ① How might living with trust and obedience in the Lord give us opportunity for gospel conversations with others?