



Sermon Growth Guide

DECEMBER 12, 2021

THE FAMILY OF GOD // "FATHER JOSEPH"

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December 12, 2021

Family of God – Father Joseph

Matthew 2:13-23

Key Verse: Matthew 2:21 “So he got up, took the child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.”

Big Idea: A person of humble and quiet obedience to God is a great role model.

Foundations

Early in his sermon, Pastor Tim asks, “Where is the model for healthy, Christian, godly masculinity?” There is a stream in secular society that says masculinity, whatever it may or may not mean, is inherently bad and the root of much ill in society. Another answer coming up from culture is the “Fight Club” answer to masculinity. Be tough and assert your control over a situation and you’re a man, a man’s man. Still too are those that boil manhood down to adventure. If you want to know what a man is, look at Bear Grylls’ latest feat in the outdoors (Bear, by the way, has a stunning conversion story!).

A fourth way for us to consider today is the way Joseph lays out for us: radical, abandoned, humble obedience to the will of God. Did Joseph need grit to move his family as a refugee? You bet. Did Joseph need an ability to traverse adventure to flee genocide and keep his family alive? You bet. But the premier quality of Joseph is his humble and quiet obedience to God, which is ultimately what makes Joseph a great role model.

Consider augmenting your group time this Advent using this year’s Advent devotional, which ties into our series on ***The Family of God***.

Blessings as you share your lives with one another and point one another to our true and eternal family.

Understanding God’s Word

Together, Matthew 2:13–23.

What do we learn about Joseph in verses 14 and 21?

Describe the kind of genocide that took place at King Herod’s command.

After King Herod died, who became King?

Applying God’s Word

Pastor Tim challenges us this week to consider the possibility that the best role models for us may be in the pews across from us. Who are your role models? A person of humble and quiet obedience to God is a great role model. Identify who inspires you to live a life of godly faith in Christ.

Witnessing God’s Word

One thing that’s so clear this week is that our church culture is starving for clear, godly role models. The life of faith requires courage, grit and a spirit of adventure.

Let’s turn the table on the role model conversation. Who can you be a role model to? Who can you mentor? Where around you can you step in and offer an example of what it means to follow Christ faithfully and courageously at any cost?

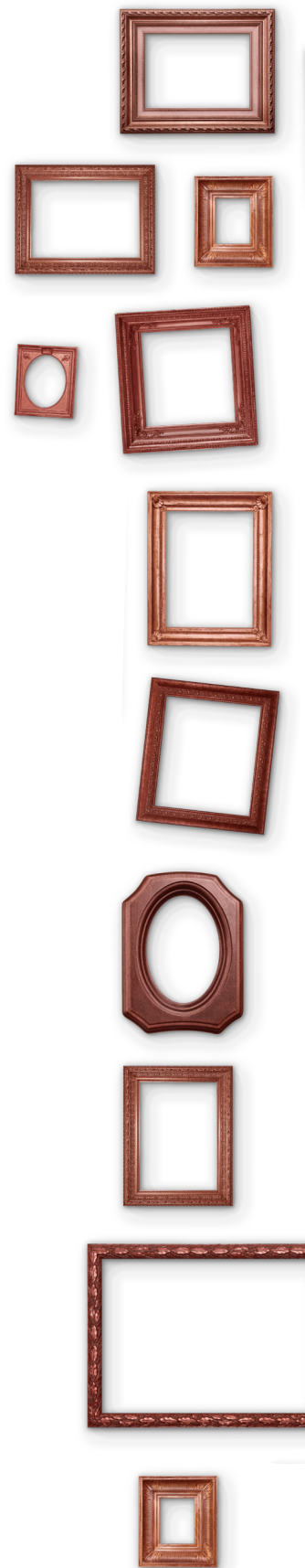
Joseph is your strong, silent type. I say that because the Bible doesn't report a single word he said. There are not many people who show up in the Bible and don't say a word. Some people use more words than others. Some use 30,000 to 40,000 words per day! Most of us are around 5,000. Joseph averaged 12. You probably know guys like this. Quiet. Sincere. When they do speak, it's gold. But what they are really known for is doing. Joseph was a doer. A man of humble obedience. This is the man God chose to raise His Son. This is the father who protected Mary and Jesus from harm. Joseph is a man who heard from God and did what God said. Humble, quiet, simple obedience. That's a little different from last week's wild cousin John. But Joseph too finds his place at the table of ***The Family of God***.

Young men are having a hard time finding models for healthy manhood. Who do you look up to guys? I mean, for me, it's Dwayne "the Rock" Johnson, as you could probably tell. No. Where is the model for healthy, Christian, godly masculinity? There are voices out there saying that there is no such thing as a good man. I know young men who feel like everywhere they go they have to be careful because being a man is inherently damaging to those around you; you will accidentally do harm just by being a male. Toxic masculinity. That's ridiculous. So the pendulum swings the opposite way. You have fringe psychologists and podcasters gathering young men around a subversive masculine resistance. Let's be those red-blooded, power hungry, aggressive men we know we are at the core! Fight club mentality. Then there are well-meaning Christian leaders saying manhood is all about adventure and conquering. If you are not currently bleeding from running into a rock or tree, you are not trying hard enough! I mean, I like screaming around on my mountain bike too, but band-aids might not be the only characteristic of a godly man. If you are a young man looking for a model, or an old man trying to figure this out, I want to suggest one thing. The model you are looking for might

not be on a stage under a spotlight or leading a retinue of Instagram followers or podcast subscribers. It might be in this room, sitting in the back, or toward the side, or quietly serving others. Just a thought.

Let's look at Joseph. I want to elevate Joseph, for all of us, but also for you young guys. Joseph is a godly man to look up to. In his quiet obedience he offers one more spiritual pathway to Jesus, a track some of us could see ourselves walking to get home to Jesus, to know ourselves in our relationship to Jesus. A way to walk into the Family of God. Joseph became a father the day Jesus was born, I believe. (There are competing legends, but I'm of the school that Joseph did not have a wife before Mary). He adopted a child who was not biologically his own. Jesus became his son. Joseph became his father. Everything the Lord asked of him, Joseph did. He found himself by being Jesus' dad.

The passage today is one that doesn't get read and preached all that much. It's called the flight to Egypt. I want us to see why this event is so important in the story of Christmas, the history of how the Messiah came into the world, but I also want us along the way to watch Joseph. What is his spiritual pathway? What is his unique contribution, according to his personality type and mannerisms? How does a guy like Joseph, a person of humble and quiet obedience, walk closer to Jesus? We see it. Before this passage, we already see it. When Mary was found to be pregnant, Joseph might have been tempted by other forms of masculinity to defend his honor by having her thrown out of the city, cast out of society, even stoned to death. But he resolved, in his way of balancing faithfulness to the law and mercy to those around him, to settle it all quietly even at expense to his own reputation and convenience. Then an angel came from heaven to reveal God's larger purposes. "But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, '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” (Matthew 1:20-21). “Marry her anyway,” God said. So what did Joseph do? He married her. “Take care of her and the child as your own,” God said. So what did Joseph do? He took care of them. This was to fulfill prophecy.

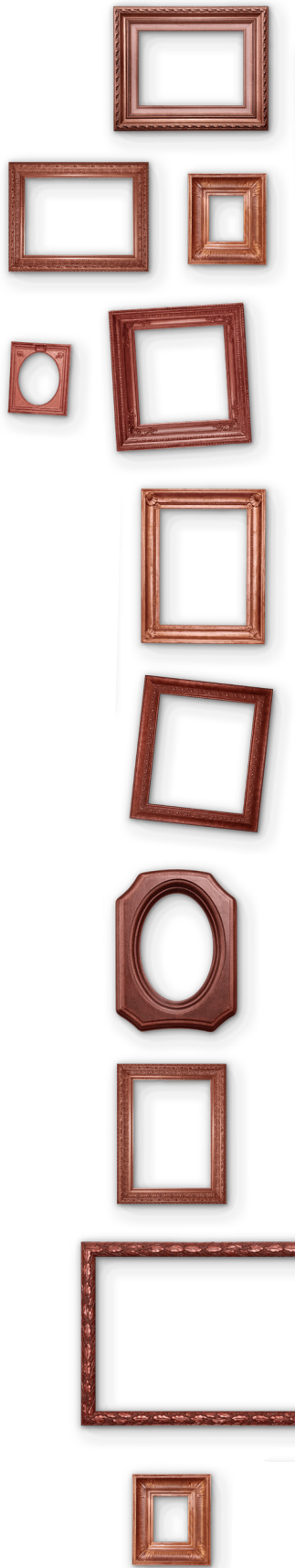
Joseph was also a man who honored the authorities with due respect. A decree went out from Caesar Augustus. A lot of men might say, well, I didn’t vote for Caesar Augustus. I don’t like Caesar Augustus. Here’s what Caesar Augustus can do with his decree! It is not hard to imagine that compliance with a decree from Rome in a distant governed province like Judea was not always 100 percent. A lot of people around Joseph probably ignored it. It would have been easy for him to do the same. “My wife is pregnant. My hometown of Bethlehem is pretty far. I don’t really have a lot of extra money around to make this comfortable for either of us. Tell you what, if Caesar wants his taxes, he can come find me.” Not Joseph. Long before Jesus said, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21 ESV). Long before Paul instructed respect for governing authorities in Romans 13 or Peter wrote to honor the emperor in 1 Peter 2, there was a long-standing teaching that the command to honor your father and mother in the Ten Commandments was also a command to honor those in authority over you with due respect.

Joseph went to Bethlehem. If he had not, Jesus would have been born in Nazareth and prophecy would have not been fulfilled. In John 7, Jesus was teaching the crowds in a way that made it seem like he was sent from God to fulfill all kinds of prophecy about the Messiah: “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them” (John 7:37-38). People started debating

who Jesus was. “When they heard these words, some of the people said, ‘This really is the Prophet.’ Others said, ‘This is the Christ.’ But some said, ‘Is the Christ to come from Galilee?’... Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee” (John 7:40-41,52 ESV). The Messiah was supposed to come from Bethlehem, where David was and where his line was established. No way a Galilean could be the Christ. Little did they know. Because Joseph was faithful and obedient, Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Now to our passage, the flight to Egypt. Did you know the Egyptian government recently designated the Journey of the Holy Family as a protected site? Who knows if they have it all correct, but to have a Muslim nation respect these sites where Christians have been traveling on pilgrimage for two thousand years is a pretty big deal. Let’s see how it went down. “When they had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. ‘Get up,’ he said, ‘take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him” (Matthew 2:13). The Lord said, “Get up in the middle of the night and go to Egypt. Run with your wife and child, run from a threat you can hardly even perceive. Pitch your family into refugee status for reasons you can hardly understand.” So, Joseph got up in the middle of the night and went to Egypt. It’s a very good thing I was not in charge of this one. I would have formed a committee. We would still be in the discernment stage when Herod’s troops burst in. But this is Joseph. What the Lord tells Joseph to do, Joseph does. No words. Humble obedience. “So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt” (Matthew 2:14).

Good thing too. The slaughter of the innocents comes next. “When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. Then what was said through the prophet



Jeremiah was fulfilled: ‘A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more’” (Matthew 2:16–18). We tend to reduce this season to frosted cookies and glittery cards; an extended children’s fair of some kind each December. This is real business. A real God entering a real world, where real children are under real threat, because men like Herod think nothing of taking others’ lives to protect their own interests. But men like Herod meet their end. “After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who were trying to take the child’s life are dead’” (Matthew 2:19–20). The Lord said, “Go back home.” Do you want to guess what Joseph did? I think you are getting the pattern now. He went back home to Galilee, to Nazareth. Again, there are competing legends, but it makes the most sense that both Mary and Joseph were from Nazareth. Whatever further business Joseph may have had in Bethlehem, he left it behind and carried on home. This too, fulfills prophecy. Jesus gets called a “Nazarene,” which is a little bit of a play on words. “Nazir” means “set apart” or “devoted for holiness” in Hebrew.

How can one man fulfill all the prophecies of the Messiah’s birth? How can Jesus be from Bethlehem, come “out of Egypt,” and be called a Nazarene? How? The humble obedience of Joseph, that’s how. Joseph, at every turn, with few words and no perceptible deliberations, did what God told him to do, immediately, fully, without reserve. Joseph is fully abandoned to God; that means God can use Joseph to do profound things. Get this now. **Out of Bethlehem.** Born in Bethlehem, the City of David. That’s where the Messiah comes from, Bethlehem, where spotless lambs are raised for sacrifice. **Out of Nazareth.** Can anything good come from Nazareth? If the Son of God is from Nazareth, a back-water, forgotten, marginalized town outside of...well...of everything!—if Jesus is from Nazareth,

we can be included too. And it plays on the word Nazirite—a person set apart for a period of time, or a lifetime, to make up for sins. A Nazirite completes a period of devotion by bringing a sacrifice to the Temple for atonement of sins. Born in Bethlehem. A Nazarene. **Out of Egypt.** I can only gesture toward something that could be a full lecture or series. If we are saved, we are “in Christ.” Jesus Christ is the recapitulation of every covenant God made with the people. Jesus is the new Adam, the new Abraham, the new Moses. In Christ, we go into exile in Egypt. In Christ, we return again to freedom in the City of God. We are, in Christ, the exile, the slave and the freed and redeemed. Out of Egypt. Jesus covers it all—and he’s still in diapers.

Do you think Joseph, the carpenter, put this whole plan together to carefully cover all the prophecies? Or do you think it never happened? Matthew stitched this all together, made it up from whole cloth, wrote it down and shared it and everybody around who knew, knew it wasn’t true, but just went along. No. I tell you, it happened. And it happened because Joseph obeyed God. When you do what you can do, you pretty much know what will happen. When you do what God tells you to do, anything can happen. Peter never thought he would walk on water until Jesus bid him come. Paul never thought he would plant the church until the Spirit compelled him. The blind man never expected to see, the lame never to walk, the man with the crippled hand never expected to stretch it out again, until Jesus ordered them to do it, and they did it, and it happened. We are looking not only at people in the Christmas story, but spiritual pathways to walk. Have you tried radical, abandoned, humble obedience? Tell me what to do, Lord. I am yours. I will do it. You will find, as you try, none was so obedient as Jesus Christ, who came, stepped out of heaven, “And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even to death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:8). You will find, as you try, you need Him.

