

**Mary and Joseph**

Passages: Mt 1:18–25; Lk 1:26–55

*Memory Verse*

“Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.” (Luke 1:45)

| <b>Knowledge of God’s Will<br/>[God’s Word]</b>             | <b>Knowledge of God<br/>[God’s Divine Nature]</b>        | <b>Good Work<br/>[Behavior]</b>   |
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| God chose Joseph and Mary to be part of His salvation plan. | God has the sovereignty to choose and use whom He wills. | 1. Prepare ourselves to be a useful vessel for the Lord.<br>2. Trust in God’s plan for our lives. |

*Overview*

**Events and Spiritual Teachings**

- A. Joseph
  - 1. The Upright One
  - 2. A Man of Faith
  - 3. A Spiritual Father
  - 4. A Caring and Responsible Father
- B. Mary
  - 1. Favored by the Lord
  - 2. A Humble Servant
  - 3. Kind-Hearted
  - 4. Kept and Pondered Things in Her Heart
  - 5. A Loving Mother to the End
- C. Their Roles in God’s Salvation Plan

**Life Application**

- 1. A Vessel Useful for the Lord
- 2. Trusting In God’s Plan

**Memory Verse**

**Conclusion:** Today, we must cultivate and prepare ourselves so that we can be useful vessels for the Lord.

## **Introduction**

Called to be the earthly parents of Jesus Christ, Mary and Joseph were used by God to raise the Son of God. Through their care, Jesus Christ grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men. Today, let us look at their many virtues that allowed them to be vessels used by the Lord to raise the Man who would become the Savior of all.

### **A. Joseph**

#### **1. The Upright One**

Let us first turn to Matthew 1:18–25. The Bible describes Joseph as “a just man” who did not desire for Mary to be “a public example, [so he] minded to put her away secretly” (v. 19). Though his fiancée Mary was pregnant with a child that was not his, Joseph did not want to publicly shame her. Instead, he wanted to take care of this matter quietly. From this, we can see that Joseph was able to find the balance between justice and mercy. Though it appeared as if Joseph had been wronged, he made the decision to keep the news from growing into a great scandal. It was not until after the angel of the Lord appeared to him that Joseph understood that Mary had actually conceived through the Holy Spirit.

#### **2. A Man of Faith**

Apart from being just, Joseph was also faithful, illustrated in his submission to the will of God. After his dream, he did not question God’s message, but did exactly as the angel of the Lord commanded him (v. 24). He took Mary into his home to be his wife and named the baby Jesus. This is not the only time the Bible records Joseph’s obedience to God’s commands. Shortly after Jesus’ birth, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph again, telling him to escape to Egypt because King Herod wanted to kill baby Jesus (Mt 2:13–14). Joseph heeded this warning and immediately took Mary and baby Jesus to depart for Egypt in the middle of the night. Upon Herod’s death, the angel of the Lord appeared again, telling him that it was safe to return to the land of Israel (vv. 19–21). After his return to the land of Israel, they settled in a town called Nazareth in Galilee. It was there that he worked as a carpenter (Mt 13:55).

#### **3. A Spiritual Father**

Joseph himself was well versed in the laws of God and followed them faithfully. In turn, he made sure Jesus was brought up in spiritual matters. He had Jesus circumcised on the eighth day (Lk 2:21) and also “brought [Jesus] to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord [...] and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord” (vv. 22–24). Every year, Joseph brought Jesus to Jerusalem to keep the Passover.

#### **4. A Caring and Responsible Father**

Lastly, let us turn to Luke 2:41–51. While returning from one of these journeys to Jerusalem, Jesus Christ, who was twelve years old, stayed behind. Joseph and Mary were unaware that Jesus had not returned with them. When they realized that Jesus was missing, they returned to Jerusalem. After three days, they finally found Him in the temple listening to teachers and asking them questions. Let’s read Luke 2:48: “So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, ‘Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.’”

Throughout this whole incident, the Bible does not record Joseph as saying anything, but from

the words of Mary, we can see that he must have been anxious to find Jesus. Just as any father would be worried to have lost their child, Joseph was worried about what had happened to Jesus. Even though Jesus was not Joseph's child by blood, God had given him the responsibility to be a father to Jesus Christ. And we can see that Joseph cared greatly for Jesus as his own.

## **B. Mary**

### **1. Favored by the Lord**

Let us turn to Luke 1:26–38. In verse 28, the angel said, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” To be favored is to be blessed. Mary was favored by the Lord because she had been chosen to bring the Messiah, Jesus Christ, into this world. This was a blessing and duty for her to carry out.

### **2. A Humble Servant**

Like Joseph, Mary also received a message concerning the birth of Jesus. She was initially troubled by the words of the angel, not knowing why an angel appeared to her. The angel of the Lord told her that she would give birth to a son. Mary's response is an illustration of her humility. She knew that to have a child out of wedlock would bring her shame. Despite this, she submitted and said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord!” (v. 38). Her acceptance of God's will for her to carry such an unimaginable responsibility also illustrates her trust in God.

We can also see her humility by taking a closer look at her praises in Luke 1:46–55. She refers often to Psalms and other Old Testament scriptures, revealing that she was quite knowledgeable concerning the word of God. In her song, she repeatedly proclaimed God's almightiness and the many great things He has done. In comparison, she described her lowly status before Him. Though she could have exalted herself for being chosen to give birth to the Messiah, she instead proclaimed, “My soul magnifies the Lord” (v. 46). Her words demonstrate her self-awareness about her status before God. Though she was so lowly and God so great, He was still willing to use her to do His great works. This is the type of God she worshiped.

### **3. Kind-Hearted**

After receiving the angel's message, Mary hurried to visit her relative Elizabeth. Out of her kindness and love, Mary then spent the next three months with Elizabeth during Elizabeth's last months of pregnancy (Lk 1:56). Another example of her kindness can be seen during the wedding at Cana (Jn 2:1–11). Seeing that the banquet was running out of wine, Mary went to Jesus, believing that He would be able to help the situation and save the banquet hosts from embarrassment. Mary believed so firmly in Jesus' power that she even said to the servants, “Whatever He says to you, do it” (Jn 2:5). In the end, Jesus turned the water into wine, manifesting His glory; as a result, His disciples believed in Him (Jn 2:11).

### **4. Kept and Pondered Things in Her Heart**

When Mary was first approached by Gabriel, her reaction to the angel's words was not laughter, disbelief, or even joy. She was “troubled,” and “considered what manner of greeting this was” (Lk 1:29). When a group of shepherds shared what they had witnessed regarding Jesus' birth, those who heard it “marveled,” but Mary “kept” and “pondered” these things in her heart (Lk 2:18–19). It is clear that Mary was not one to leap to conclusions, but a thoughtful person who spent time treasuring, questioning, and meditating upon things in her life. Later, when she and Joseph found Jesus in the temple, “they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them,” but “His mother kept all these things in her heart” (Lk 2:49–51). The Greek word for

“kept” can also be translated as *preserved*. In other words, she cherished and treasured the things that she witnessed – even the things that she didn’t understand.

#### **5. A Loving Mother to the End**

Though Mary was joyful for being chosen, we can see that she suffered as a result. In Luke 2:35, Simeon prophesied to her that “a sword will pierce through [her] own soul” concerning her Child. Even as Mary witnessed the horror and pain that Jesus had to endure on the cross, she refused to leave His side (Jn 19:25). For a parent, it is often more painful to see their child suffer than to endure their own suffering. No one would blame her if she decided to leave. But she put aside her own needs to remain by the cross and be there for Jesus. And Jesus, full of love, asked apostle John to take care of His mother before He gave up His last breath (Jn 19:26–27).

#### **C. Their Roles in God’s salvation Plan**

God changed the direction of Mary and Joseph’s lives in ways that they would never have thought. They could never have imagined that they would become the earthly parents of the Messiah. However, they were both chosen to play a part in God’s salvation plan. The Lord called them to raise the Child that would grow to be the Savior of the world. Through their humility and submission to His calling, they were able to experience the miracle of Jesus’ birth and the fulfillment of the prophecy of the coming Messiah as spoken in Isaiah 7:14. Jesus came into this world exactly as prophesied; He was born from a virgin.

Furthermore, we can see God’s heart in choosing Mary and Joseph. God could have placed Jesus Christ in a wealthy family or even in the household of a king, but He allowed Jesus to be born in the house of a carpenter from a small town. From this, we can see that God chooses based not on earthly standards, such as wealth, social status, or education, but on the heart and virtues of the person. Though Mary and Joseph came from humble backgrounds, they were lowly and submissive in heart. These characteristics allowed them to be used by the Lord to fulfill His wonderful will.

Since they had found favor with God, and God had chosen them and entrusted them with raising Jesus, He also protected them from harm that could have come their way, such as the threat from King Herod. It is through God’s protection that Joseph and Mary were able to raise Jesus Christ and to allow Him to grow in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

#### ***Check for Understanding***

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##### **1. Find Bible verses that show how Joseph was:**

- An upright and just man (*Mt 1:19*)
- A man of faith (*Mt 1:24*)
- A spiritual father (*Lk 2:21–24*)
- A caring and responsible father (*Lk 2:41–49*)

##### **2. Find Bible verses that show how Mary was:**

- Favored by the Lord (*Lk 1:28*)
- A humble servant (*Lk 1:48*)
- Kind-hearted (*Lk 1:56*)
- One who kept and pondered things in her heart (*Lk 2:19, 51*)
- A loving mother to the end (*Jn 19:25*)

- 3. What blessings did Mary and Joseph receive because of God's choosing?** They experienced the miracle of Jesus' birth and the protection of God, and they also saw the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy concerning Jesus Christ.

### *Life Application*

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**1. A Vessel Useful for the Lord**

*"Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work."*

(2 Timothy 2:21)

Mary and Joseph had the unique opportunity to raise Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God could have chosen anyone, but He chose Mary and Joseph. They did not have great wealth, nor were they nobility, but God does not look upon these things. Instead, God saw their heart of faith and willingness to submit to His plan for them. Today, we have also been chosen to be His children. However, in order for God use us, we must first prepare ourselves both physically and mentally.

When we practice an instrument or learn a new language in school, we are preparing ourselves to serve the Lord. But in addition to building up our physical talents, we must also build up our hearts.

**a. Cultivate a heart of obedience**

Obedience is a characteristic that we have to cultivate. It does not come naturally but requires us to deny ourselves. God has told us that those who are obedient to His word are blessed (Lk 11:28). If we are able to be obedient in the small things, then we are able to grow in our heart of obedience.

*Example:* When we are told to clean the restroom, we do not complain about the task. Instead, we clean it with joy!

**b. Be faithful in the small things**

Similar to practicing obedience, when we complete what God has entrusted to us in faith, we are training ourselves in faithfulness. God will then give us more opportunities to serve. Luke 16:10 tells us: "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much."

*Example:* When we have been given the duty to be a hymn leader or a pianist, we make sure we arrive early to pray and prepare our hearts.

**c. Ask God to help us overcome our struggles**

When we serve God, we may find it difficult to serve faithfully when we are experiencing struggles. We do not have to be perfect in order to serve God, but it is important that we ask God to help us overcome the struggles that we are experiencing. Whether we are always tempted to lie, or face an addiction of some sort, the process of overcoming our struggles is not a one-day process. We must strive to overcome and put in a long-term effort to improve ourselves. What struggles do you face? How can you improve yourself?

*Example:* We can try to find one thing each week to work on, such as our speech or our actions. We can make the determination to say thank you to our parents, instead of complaining, or we can try to put away our phones or electronic devices during dinnertime.

When we prepare ourselves properly with the right heart, then God will be able to use us fully in the work that He has planned for us. This preparation begins today!

### **Discussion**

- What is your motivation to serve the Lord? Do you do it because you want to or because you have been assigned?
- In what areas do you need to cultivate your obedience?
- In what areas do you need to be faithful in the small things?
- Upon what areas do you still need to improve so that you can serve God wholeheartedly?

## **2. Trusting in God's Plan**

Oftentimes, God will place us in situations that are not part of our plans. Joseph and Mary could never have guessed that they would become the earthly parents of Jesus Christ. Joseph was given the responsibility of taking care of a Child that was not his own. Mary was given a Child that she would have to see suffer on the cross. However, God planned all these things.

Today, we will also encounter many situations in our lives that may not go according to our plans. Through the struggles and hardship in our lives, we must always remember to trust in God's plan for our life. Mary and Joseph had been given their roles to be part of God's salvation plan, and God protected them along the way.

God has a plan for us, and it is important that we come to trust in this greater plan for our lives. When we encounter a trial, it may be a reminder that God wants us to remember to be humble and rely on Him. When we become ill, it may be a reminder that God wants us to be grateful when we are healthy. The difficulties we experience can be the building blocks that strengthen and build up our faith.

*"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."*

(Romans 8:28)

God has already called us. As we continue to love Him wholeheartedly, He will continue to work in our lives. The good or the bad that happens will become good, as long as we trust in His plan and hold on to Him.

### **Discussion**

- Share a difficulty that God allowed in your life to help you grow.
- Share one thing you learned from experiencing that difficulty.
- If you had not experienced that difficulty, what do you imagine might be different today?

### **Memory Verse**

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"Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." (Luke 1:45)

### **Context**

Elizabeth spoke this blessing to Mary when Mary came to visit her.

**Meaning**

1. Her words were an encouragement that God's words are faithful and that those who trust in His words will be blessed.
2. Because Mary believed, all that the Lord told her would be fulfilled.
3. When we believe in God's promise, He will fulfill His will in our lives.

**Conclusion**

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God chose Mary and Joseph to be part of His salvation plan. Though they came from humble origins, they were good and useful vessels because they possessed many spiritual virtues. God chose them to fulfill His great will because He looks not at the outward appearance, but at the heart (1 Sam 16:7). Today, let us continue to cultivate and prepare ourselves so that we can be useful vessels for the Lord.

## Lesson 2 Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What is the context for the memory verse? How do these words encourage us?  
*They are Elizabeth's words to Mary when she visited. They are an encouragement that God's words are faithful, and that those who trust in His words will be blessed. When we believe in God's promises, He will fulfill His will in our lives.*
2. We learned four characteristics of Joseph today. Pick two and explain how he shows each.  
*See Section A.*
3. We learned five characteristics of Mary today. Pick two and explain how she shows each.  
*See Section B.*
4. What virtues allowed Joseph and Mary to be vessels for God's salvation plan?  
*They were both lowly, humble, and submissive in heart to God's will.*
5. How can we become vessels useful for the Lord?  
*Cultivate a heart of obedience, be faithful in the small things, and ask God to help us overcome our struggles. We must also trust in God's greater plan for our lives.*
6. What is one thing you can work on this week to help you serve God wholeheartedly?  
*Personal answers.*