

[No doctrine is a given unless it has been found in the Word given by the Holy Spirit and received by you. If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at tbeachhead@comcast.net. Thank you for taking the time—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.]

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP.** BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! **Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study.**

Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 12/3. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnotes include:

1. [On Communion and its meaning.](#)
2. [On betrothal.](#)
3. [On "You will be holy."](#)
4. [On Joseph's age.](#)

*****Important:** At the very [end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week. ***

Pastor opens the message by acknowledging that we are a very narcissistic society. How does that manifest itself?

He continues, "Our calling may very well be to support someone else's calling."

1. Explain why this is difficult.
2. Explain why this is not a loss.
3. Do you have a testimony?
4. How does this speak of Joseph?

Look at Matthew 1:¹⁸This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged in marriage to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and was unwilling to disgrace her publicly, he resolved to divorce her quietly.

²⁰But after he had pondered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to embrace Mary as your wife, for the One conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will give birth

to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.”

22All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

23“Behold, the virgin will be with child

and will give birth to a son,

and they will call Him Immanuel”

(which means, “God with us”). (See last week’s footnotes.)

24When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and embraced Mary as his wife. **25**But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a Son. And he gave Him the name Jesus.

1. What do you see?
2. Did an angel come to Joseph as Gabriel came to Mary?
3. What is the difference? Is faith more significant/challenging, when the guidance comes in a dream? Explain?
4. What is the significance in the angel calling Joseph “the son of David?”
5. Describe Joseph’s call. What was his responsibility? What is Mary’s role?
6. How many details of the days ahead are given to Joseph? Do you know more than Joseph did at the time?
7. He did as the Angel commanded him. He embraced Mary as his wife, but chose not to touch Mary until after Jesus was born. That goes beyond the angel’s instruction. Why is this a crucial insight?
8. How did Joseph’s humility play a role?

Pastor Mark points out that Joseph decided to support Mary. Take a moment to look up what Paul says about us in the last days in 2 Timothy 3: **1***But understand this: In the last days terrible times will come. 2*For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, **3**unloving, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, without love of good, **4**traitorous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **5**having a form of godliness but denying its power. Turn away from such as these! **6**They are the kind people who worm their way into households and captivate vulnerable women who are weighed down with sins and led astray by various passions, **7**women who are always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth.

1. How narcissistic are we?
2. How close is Paul in his description of today’s society?
3. What is the key contributor to today’s 21st century narcissism?
4. Compare this to Joseph’s words and his actions.
5. What happens when you discover you are not the “star of the story?” (Have you ever tried out for a play, been part of a dance performance, or played in sports? What happened when you did not get the role or position you hoped for? Do you have a testimony?)

Joseph did not debate with the Angel.

1. Pastor asks, “Are we at that place where we are willing to say, ok. I trust you. We submit to God’s purposes and plans, and set aside our own?”

2. Pastor points out that Joseph was willing to say my life is not my own and to remove himself from center stage. Remembering that Joseph was a trained carpenter, what did he have to change in his reckoning?
3. Have you been in a position where the supporting role you played, though not center stage, was also pivotal for the success of the project/plan/family enterprise? Can you describe what that felt like?
4. Joseph was being invited into a divine story that God was working. What role did Joseph's own will play in the process? What choices did he have?

Pastor Mark outlines Joseph's thoughts. "My betrothed is pregnant, and it wasn't me. The wedding is off, but Mary must be protected. No one must know." (Scribes note: The Law demands that Mary be stoned.) Then an angelic visitation in a dream is all the instruction he has. He submits to the instructions and accepts Mary as wife (See [notes on betrothal below](#).)

1. How are Joseph's choices remarkable.
2. Describe the ways his life is changed.
3. Put yourself in Joseph's role. What questions come to mind? How well do you follow his example?

Pastor points out, "Faith instructs us to believe what God has clearly promised, and to make our stand without seeing first the results. We say, "My life is not my own. I have been bought with a price." Look up 1 Corinthians 6: **19** Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; **20** [you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body.](#)

1. Paul is speaking in this passage of the practical call to holiness, free from the lust of the flesh. How are Joseph's choices a reflection of this principle?
2. What is the alternative to faith and obedience? What are the consequences of disobedience and doubt?
3. What is the promise of faith and obedience?
4. When Joseph determined to treat Mary with honor, to shield and protect her what did he face in his own community? How did God remove him from his community, and protect him in his decision? What part did Caesar play?

Pastor asks. Would you be willing to say, "Yes," when God asks you to do something that was not in your plan? Answer him. Do you have a testimony?
Life lessons from Joseph:

1. He showed faithful support and understanding. Empathy and trust in his relationship. Joseph was called to go alongside Mary in a patriarchal society where the wife supports the husband. His protection of her was pivotal to the success of God's plan. His was to look after Mary's needs. Be supportive and understanding in relationships. Can you come alongside another and support them in their projects and needs?
2. Humility and acceptance of your role. Humility says I am not in control. My life is not my own. Joseph's contribution was a dedicated determination to obedience to the Angel's instruction. How was Joseph's response to the Angel similar to Mary's response to Gabriel that we saw last week, when she

- said, “Behold, the handmade of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to your Word.” Talk about Mary and Joseph, a match made in heaven. How vulnerable did Joseph make himself with each decision he made? What expectations and fears did Joseph have to put aside?
3. Obedience to God’s guidance through the Holy Spirit. Be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Look up John 16: [6](#)Instead, your hearts are filled with sorrow because I have told you these things. [7](#)But I tell you the truth, it is for your benefit that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. [8](#)And when He comes, He will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: Be keenly aware of the Spirit’s purpose in teaching, leading and guiding. Be determined to be willing and obedient. Look up Isaiah 1: [18](#)“Come now, let us reason together,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are as red as crimson, they will become like wool. [19](#)If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best of the land. [20](#)But if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword.” For the mouth of the LORD has spoken. What part does willingness and obedience play in our own redemption?
 4. Practice selflessness, placing others’ needs over yours. Review what Paul told the Philippians in chapter 2: [3](#)*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride, but in humility consider others more important than yourselves.* [4](#)*Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.* [5](#)*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: [6](#)Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped...*How did Joseph’s choices reflect Christ’s character, even before the advent of Christ? How is that possible? Can you name an OT hero who reflected Christ’s character?
 5. Recognize life’s purposes beyond personal goals. Explain what this even means. Is there a “greater purpose” than getting a job? Why? Joseph realized that his plans as a carpenter were secondary. How did that decision work out for us?
 6. Trusting in God’s plan. When he asks us to do it He has a plan. We have to trust him. He will also bring it to pass. Look up 1 Thessalonians 5: [23](#)*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your entire spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. [24](#)The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.* Make a note of how blamelessness is part of God’s plan for us. How can we trust Him? How can we not trust Him when it is written that HE will do (Greek: *poieo* make, manufacture, construct, act on, cause) it?
 7. Cultivate patience and resilience to navigate life’s challenges. List the unexpected events that Joseph faced from the moment Mary said “Yes” to Gabriel. How much control did Joseph have over the events? Over what did Joseph have control? How did he need patience? Why did he need resilience?
 8. Living a life of integrity and righteousness. Joseph was called a “righteous man.” Looking at this story, what exactly did that mean? What does it look

like? Can you prove he pursued holiness? What does it look like to be in the world not of the world? Look at [footnote 3 below](#). How does righteousness as a promise differ from righteousness as a matter of your own effort? If you are promised righteousness, how do you pursue it, especially if you have prevailing sin in your own life? Whom do you imitate? How?

The Follow-up Application

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Pick one of the eight life's lessons drawn from Joseph's life, above, and work on making it a part of your life throughout this week. Take notes.

Take the time to pray.

Scribe's Notes:

1. **On communion and its meaning**—In Luke 22, the passage from which Mark read this morning, we discover two astonishing facts: *“[20](#)This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood, [21](#)But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. [22](#)For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!” [23](#)And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this. [24](#)A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.* The first is this: Not only did Jesus wash Judas' feet before supper, but Judas partook of the first communion. Communion does not save a person. Next we notice that the disciples were not transformed into blameless, selfless saints. There were not changed by communion, but had the same tendency to self-exaltation. Communion does not change a person. Communion was given to remind the church that there is something far more important, far greater than any individual in the body. We are to remember His death until His return, because He alone can set our priorities rightly.
2. **On betrothal**—In biblical times, people were married in early youth, and marriages were usually contracted within the narrow circle of the clan and the family. It was undesirable to marry a woman from a foreign clan, lest she introduce foreign beliefs and practices. Negotiating a Match: As a rule, the fathers arranged the match. The girl was consulted, but the “calling of the damsel and inquiring at her mouth” after the conclusion of all negotiations was merely a formality. In those days a father was more concerned about the marriage of his sons than about the marriage of his daughters. No expense was involved in marrying off a daughter. The father received a dowry for his daughter whereas he had to give a dowry to the prospective father-in-law of his son when marrying him off. The price paid by the father of the groom to the father of the bride was called *mohar*. (The term continues to be included in the text of the traditional ketubah, or Jewish wedding contract.) In Genesis ([Parashat Vayishlah](#)), Shekem [Dinah's suitor] said to

Dinah's father and her brothers: "Let me find favor in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. Ask me never so much mohar and *mattan*, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me; but give me the damsel to wife." "Mattan" was the Hebrew word for the gifts given by the groom to the bride in addition to the mohar. The mohar was not always paid in cash. Sometimes it was paid in kind, or in service. The Book of Genesis relates the story of the servant of Abraham, who, after his request for Rebecca [to marry Isaac] was granted, "brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebecca; he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things." The servant thus gave mattan to Rebecca, and mohar to her brother and mother. (<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ancient-jewish-marriage/>) In another article, there is deeper understanding of the meaning of betrothal given on another Jewish website, highlighting that a couple betrothed is indeed, husband and wife, albeit without the consummation, which is the second part of the institution of marriage: "The following explanatory note is necessary in order to have a basic understanding of the chupah ceremony proceedings: According to Torah law, marriage is a two-step process. The first stage is called "kiddushin," and the second step is known as "nisu'in." Both kiddushin and nisu'in are accomplished successively beneath the chupah. Kiddushin is commonly translated as betrothal, but actually renders the bride and groom full-fledged husband and wife. After this point, if, G-d forbid, they decided to part ways, a "get" (Jewish divorce) would be required. However, the bride and groom are not permitted to live together as husband and wife until the second stage, the nisu'in, is completed. While there are several ways to effect a kiddushin, the common custom is to do so with a ring — the customary wedding band. The nisu'in is accomplished through "chupah" — the husband uniting with the wife under one roof for the sake of marriage. According to [Torah](#) law, there are three ways to betroth a woman:¹ a) A money transaction. The man gives to the woman money or any object of value. b) A document. The man gives the woman a marriage document which states his intention to marry her.² c) Sexual intercourse with the intention that it consummates the marriage. **In ancient times, the two stages of marriage were done on separate occasions** The rabbis forbade betrothing through intercourse, making it a punishable offense. In order for the betrothal to take effect, the transaction must be witnessed by two kosher witnesses. (https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/477321/jewish/Kiddushin-Betrothal.htm)

3. **On "You will be holy as the Father in heaven is holy"**—The Hebrew language has no future tense. The command to be holy is translated as a command. When that command is brought into the New Testament in First Peter, the Greek text uses the future tense, rendered "[13](#)Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. [14](#)As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, [15](#)but as he who called

you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy.’” This is the translation from the ESV. Other translations put it into the imperative (“Be holy...”), eliminating the aspect of promise so intertwined in the gospel. Holiness/righteousness is not a reward for effort. Indeed it is the result of one righteous act, that gift of grace in the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. The result is a longing for holiness whose satisfaction is given by the promise in Christ.

4. **On Joseph’s age**—A Roman was considered of age when he was fourteen. At that point he could marry, vote and own property. Joseph would have been called to take part as a legal individual in the census at that age. A Jew is bar mitzvah’d at the age of thirteen at which point he’s a son of the covenant, and able to participate and lead in rituals and practices. The mystery of Joseph’s disappearance in the gospels is not solved in knowing these Roman and Jewish customs. It is true, however that average life expectancy was as low as the forties in his day, and we do know that Joseph was with Jesus at the age of twelve, and he was not mentioned at the cross though his mother was a prominent player. It is a safe bet, since Joseph was not mentioned at the wedding in Cana, that he had passed before Jesus’ ministry began. It is also clear that Jesus was known in Nazareth as Joseph’s son, and both Jesus and Joseph were renowned carpenters in Nazareth and as far away as Capernaum (John 6:42).

For further study:

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP**... (**S**cripture—Copy the scripture. / **O**bservation—Write what you see. / **A**pplication—What is God saying? / **P**ray—What is your response?) ...method to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: Matthew 1:19-21
Tuesday: 2 Timothy 3:1-4
Wednesday: 1 Peter 1:13-15
Thursday: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
Friday: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24
Saturday: Isaiah 1:18-20
Sunday: John 16:6-8

Once again, some passages suggested here have more than the usual number of verses. This is not to increase the burden but to provide clarity of context. Pick the verses that speak to you most clearly, and run these through the SOAP steps.