

# The Christmas Experience

## Week 3: Faithful One

1. What is your initial reaction to this week's video presentation?
  - Read Matthew 1 :18-24.
2. Put yourself in Joseph's sandals as he dealt with these extraordinary circumstances. What would you have been thinking or feeling?
  - When you first hear the news that Mary is with child?
  - When you awake from your dream in which the angel Gabriel speaks to you?
  - After marrying Mary and then facing the rejection of family and friends?
  - As you consider how you will be the earthly father of the long-awaited Messiah?
  - When you arrive in Bethlehem and find there is no place to stay and for the child to be born (see Luke 2:7)?
3. Through all these circumstances, how was Joseph living for God's rather than man's approval?
4. Read verses 22 and 23 again. Why are these verses so vital for Jesus' identity and the gospel?
  - Why is the fulfillment of Scripture so important to Jesus' birth?
  - Why is it significant that Jesus was born of a virgin?
  - What is the significance that Jesus would be called Immanuel, God with us?
5. What does it say about Joseph that when he woke up he did what the angel of the Lord commanded him?

Most of the circumstances in which Joseph found himself were out of his control. Like him, we must differentiate between what we can't change and what we can. Perhaps you've seen or heard the first part of the "Serenity Prayer":

God grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot change;  
courage to change the things I can;  
and wisdom to know the difference  
  
Living one day at a time;  
Enjoying one moment at a time;

Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;  
Taking, as He did, this sinful world  
as it is, not as I would have it;  
Trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His Will;  
That I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with Him  
Forever in the next.  
Amen.

6. What parts of Joseph's circumstances could he not change?
  - What parts could he change?
  - How did he know the difference?
7. Have you ever been in a situation in which, like Joseph, you thought you had just a couple options, but then God showed you a Plan B or Plan C?
  - How did you hear from God?
  - How easy or hard was it to obey what you sensed God telling you to do?

## Between the Meeting Options

- Mary and Joseph both teach us to surrender our own will to God's will. Mary said to the angel, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as you have said" (Luke 1:38). Joseph "did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife" (Matthew 2:24). Their son grew up and when he came to a critical decision in his life, he said, "Yet not my will, but your will be done" (Luke 22:42).
- This week, use these verses to talk with your children, or others with whom you have some influence, about following God's will, especially when they have tough decisions to make.
- Through the week, read the Serenity Prayer and pray, asking God to give you the wisdom to know the difference between what you cannot change and what you can. Surrender your decisions to him, just as Joseph did.
- Call a fellow group member and ask about decisions he or she is "sleeping on" this week, which were brought up during the prayer time. Take a moment and pray together on the phone.
- Read and meditate on Philippians 2:1-11 throughout the week.