

What Role Did Joseph Have in Jesus' Life?

Joseph was God's Son's earthly father. He was Jesus' teacher, coach and mentor during Jesus' youth. Joseph was the God-chosen leader of the family that helped prepare Jesus for the most important ministry in history.

Fatherhood Principles of Joseph the Carpenter sheds light on effective Godly fatherhood strategies through the story of this great man of faith. It shows how he facilitated for Jesus' development, and how he protected his family.

Joseph's role in Jesus' life was so stunning that he is the 21st century role-model that fathers need today. See how Joseph was so successful and why God chose him to be His Son's father.

About the Author

Akili Kumasi is a devoted husband and the father of two young men and two girls. He is president of the Reconciled Fathers Network, an organization dedicated to helping separated fathers and to raising the standard of fatherhood.



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FATHERHOOD PRINCIPLES OF JOSEPH THE CARPENTER



Examples of Godly Fatherhood

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Fatherhood Principles of Joseph the Carpenter: Examples of Godly Fatherhood

by Akili Kumasi

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DEDICATION

This book on the fatherhood principles of Joseph the Carpenter is dedicated to all the fathers in the world who seek to be good and Godly men, husbands and fathers.

Although we all fall short of perfection, God is working on each and every one of us until we come home to be with Him.

I especially want to thank my six uncles (Isaac, Willie, Willis, Timmy, Alex and Patrick). Each of you played a particularly important part in my youth. I love each of you and thank you for what you have sown into my life.

May God truly bless you all!

Your nephew,
Akili

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We formed a focus group that has given rise to the on-going **Joseph the Carpenter Focus Groups**. I will forever cherish the discussions and the debates of the scriptures and your sacrificial effort to be supportive and encouraging while offering construction criticism. Our meetings greatly helped me to dig deeper into the scriptures to uncover more truth and understanding of God's Word.

I thank you and your families for your dedication to seeing this project through. Without that priceless contribution, this book would not have been completed.

Second, I want to thank my Pastor, Bishop Roderick R. Caesar, Jr., for his prayers, his encouragement and his admonishment when each was needed to get me on the right track. I thank you for being the general who helps prepare soldiers and leaders for the Kingdom battle.

Lastly, and most importantly, I thank my wife Daisy for believing in me, for loving me and for being my co-laborer in Christ. I love you without reservation and thank you for taking me and this book and showing me

how to shape it, sharpen it and present it for maximum effect.

Thank you for being my partner, lover and friend.

Akili Kumasi
June 2009

PREFACE

Fatherhood has been a topic of keen interest to me since I first looked up to my own father. He was my hero of sorts.

Over the years I have discovered that fatherhood presents certain and clear challenges to most men and that a strong and true man should make a strong and true father. But, that is not always the case; the road is sometimes very divergent. In my case, it was not until I became a father that I got serious about being a man! Today, I write books on fatherhood.

It is my hope that our books can help other men in their quests to be good and Godly fathers.

“GOOD” FATHERHOOD VERSUS “GODLY” FATHERHOOD

In another book, *On the Outside Looking In: Hope for Separated Fathers Who Want To Be Good Fathers*, I wrote about the seven principles of “Good” Fatherhood.¹ They are not the same seven principles that are presented in this book.

On the Outside Looking In was written to encourage men that do not live with their children (separated fathers) and to specifically address the unique challenges of not living in the same household as their children.

¹ Akili Kumasi, *On The Outside Looking In: Hope for Separated Fathers Who Want To Be Good Fathers* (New York, NY: GIL Publications, 2006).

The seven principles of good fatherhood as presented in *On The Outside Looking In* are:

1. Love
2. Nurture
3. Discipline
4. Commitment
5. Responsibility
6. Closeness
7. Consistency

On the other hand, this book, *Fatherhood Principles of Joseph the Carpenter*, presents seven Godly principles of fatherhood that were inspired by the life of Joseph the Carpenter.

Both sets of principles are applicable for all men who strive to be good and Godly fathers.

INTRODUCTION

I. JOSEPH THE MAN, HUSBAND AND FATHER

The story of Joseph the Carpenter is not just a story of a foster-father. More importantly, it is a story of: (1) what type of man Joseph was, (2) what type of husband he was, and (3) what type of father he was. This book looks at how Joseph's relationship with God and his manhood character determined his husband and fatherhood character.

This book is for men of all ages, whether they are a father or not, because it examines the whole man as a person - who becomes a husband and then a father.

Many, many books already discuss how a father should act, what he should or should not do or how a Christian father should behave. This is not that kind of book. This book on the *Fatherhood Principles of Joseph the Carpenter* offers a new paradigm on fatherhood, one that explores the father from the inside-out rather than from the outside-in. That is, how being Godly affects a man's fatherhood practice.

There are only a small number of books about Joseph (in comparison to the numerous volumes written on other Biblical and historical figures). Although he was a great man in history and a great man of God, historians and Bible scholars seem to have almost passed him over.

Right now, when fatherhood has taken a heavy hit and men need a Godly source of encouragement, understanding and a challenge, the story of Joseph the

Carpenter is due to be revealed and even to be popularized.

In the history of mankind, Joseph is one of the most important examples of fatherhood. God choose Joseph to be His own Son's father here on earth and to provide for Jesus in a way that would help prepare Him for the world's most important ministry. Joseph, therefore, had to be a very special man, enabled by God to be the practitioner and example of fatherhood second only to God Himself.

What an awesome responsibility on Joseph to be the earthly father to the Son of God. But, Joseph does not appear to have been fearful or reluctant in his role or his responsibility. Joseph seemed to exude a quiet strength. He had God the Father with him and he knew it.

Joseph was a man of God and a servant of the Almighty. The principles which he lived by are clearly established throughout the scriptures. This is why it is important to write about Joseph, for the world to see this primary example of a Godly man becoming a Godly husband and then a Godly father. The fatherhood example of Joseph also helps us to set a higher standard of fatherhood that can inspire and encourage every man today.

II. GREAT MEN OF FAITH

The stories of many well known Biblical men of seemingly giant proportion like Noah, Abraham, or David are easily recounted. The Bible provides a lot of direct accounts of their triumphs, their strengths, their weaknesses, their failures and how God worked in their lives.

Noah "**walked with God**"² (Genesis 6:9). His job was to preserve righteous life on earth. Abraham was a

² All scripture quotes are in **bold and italicized**

"**friend of God**" (James 2:23). He had the job of birthing a nation that would bring forth the Messiah. David was "**a man after his (God's) own heart**" (1 Samuel 13:14, author's parentheses). David's job was to reign over the House of Israel.

But, who was Joseph? He was God's Son's "**father**"! His job was to carry the baby Jesus through his youth and beyond so that the world could know Him.

Like Noah, Abraham and David, Joseph was a generational link to the Messiah. Un-like Noah, Abraham and David, the Bible recorded no faults of Joseph and no negative impressions of him.³

III. WHAT IS THERE TO SAY ABOUT JOSEPH?

Many people who speak or write about Joseph emphasis his silence because the Bible does not record any of his spoken words. Obviously what he did was more important than what he said.

There is a specific reason why God choose not to record any words from Joseph. But, Joseph certainly was not silent when he lived on this earth. We shall see that in his fatherhood role - of an estimated eight or more children - it is reasonable that Joseph had a lot to say.

Perhaps God did not record the words of Joseph because God's own words needed to be given focus and Jesus' upbringing had to be put into its proper perspective - to be seen as the result of God's work - not man's work.

When I told some people that I was going to write this book about Joseph the Carpenter I got comments from knowledgeable people like "There's very little in the

³ For further discussion of the similarities between Noah, Abraham and Joseph, see *Godly Fatherhood Principle #1: Be a Godly Man*.

Bible about Joseph.” and “There’s almost nothing in there about him.” I even read in a Biblical dictionary, “All that is told of Joseph in the New Testament could be summed up in a few words.”⁴

All of these statements are true. However, God opened up the scriptures for me to see astounding truths about this great man of faith. The details of Joseph’s life, which we used to just glance over, now reveal important and significant principles about Godly fatherhood.

IV. THIS BOOK

In this book we show how Joseph demonstrated that he was close to God in thought, in action and in word – which led him every step of the way.

At the same time, this book uses the life of Joseph to construct and explain seven Godly principles of Fatherhood that can be employed by men today.

Joseph has to be viewed not only as a father, but first as a man, then as a husband and finally as a father. This is the natural and Godly progression for a man. Thus we use this approach to present seven Godly fatherhood principles.

In order to construct a comprehensive story of Joseph, and the fatherhood principles that flow from the examination of his life, we had to dissect and re-dissect the available scriptures from many perspectives several times over and from various Bible versions. Since the scriptures were originally written (primarily) in Hebrew and Greek we examined many of the words in their original language in order to get beneath the surface of the English words used in the various Bible versions

⁴ William Smith (F.N. and M.A. Peloubet, Editors), *A Dictionary of the Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1986), p. 322.

(translations).⁵ Thus, this work presents some of that research which led to a more definitive understanding of God’s Word on Joseph.

We certainly hope that *Fatherhood Principles of Joseph the Carpenter: Examples of Godly Fatherhood* is challenging, educational and enjoyable.

Akili Kumasi
June 2009

⁵ See the copyright page of this book for a list of Protestant Bible versions (translations) used.

THE STORY OF JOSEPH THE CARPENTER

Joseph of Nazareth, or Joseph the Carpenter, as he has come to be known, was the foster-father of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Biblical accounts of Joseph seem to present him as having a sole purpose – to be the head of the family that the Messiah was born into and reared on earth. Thus, he was the husband to Mary, the earthly father to Jesus Christ and the father to Jesus' half-brothers and half-sisters.

This chapter presents the historical story of Joseph the Carpenter as background to the discussion of the seven Godly fatherhood principles.

Part of the responsibility of presenting the story of Joseph the Carpenter is to counter some popularly believed myths about Joseph. Thus, this account of Joseph is taken strictly from the Bible⁶ – which is our authoritative source for documenting the Godly life of this great man.

I. JOSEPH'S BACKGROUND AND LINAGE⁷

Joseph was a descendant of the house of David. He was the son of Jacob. The Bible records no other

⁶ This story of Joseph the Carpenter is derived from the Protestant Bible. Throughout this book, other sources are used only to document historical facts of history, especially that of Jewish customs and traditions. See the copyright page of this book for a list of Bible versions (translations) used.

⁷ The genealogy of Jesus as presented in Matthew 1:16 establishes that Joseph was a descendant of the House of David. It says Joseph father's name was Jacob. However, Luke 3:23 says Joseph's father's name was Heli.

information about his family background, his mother or his siblings. From scripture there is no evidence that he was previously married or had children before his marriage to Mary. Nor is there any indication in the Bible that he was a much older man as is popularly believed.

We are simply told that Joseph was a **just man** (Matthew 1:19 KJV) or a **righteous man** (Matthew 1:19 NIV). Any historical background about Joseph other than that does not come from the Bible.

II. JOSEPH AND MARY'S ENGAGEMENT

Joseph and Mary were already engaged to be married when God sent the angel Gabriel to visit Mary (Luke 1:26-27).

Their engagement, however, was not like what we call an engagement today. It was much more binding. In ancient Jewish tradition, once the man and woman became officially engaged, they entered *kiddushin* and were in fact legally married, but not yet living together.

Kiddushin means the consecration of the bride for her husband⁸ and is the first of two distinct stages in the marriage process. *Kiddushin* could begin up to a year or two before the final stage of *nissuin*. Since *kiddushin* began the legal marriage, at that point it could only end through death or divorce.⁹

At the second stage, *nissuin*, the couple would

⁸ William Barclay, *The Ten Commandments*, (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1999), p. 100. This was also a period of preparation for the husband.

⁹ "Process of Marriage: Kiddushin and Nisuin," *Jewish Virtual Library*, <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/marriage.html> (accessed February 15, 2008); Tracey Rich, "Marriage: The Process of Marriage: Kiddushin and Nisuin," *Judaism 101*, <http://www.jewfaq.org/marriage.htm> (accessed February 15, 2008).

complete the marriage process and begin their life together in the same house.

It was after Mary and Joseph had entered the *kiddushin* stage that God sent the angel Gabriel to visit Mary and to tell her of God's plan for her life. She became pregnant with the Messiah through the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:31-35).

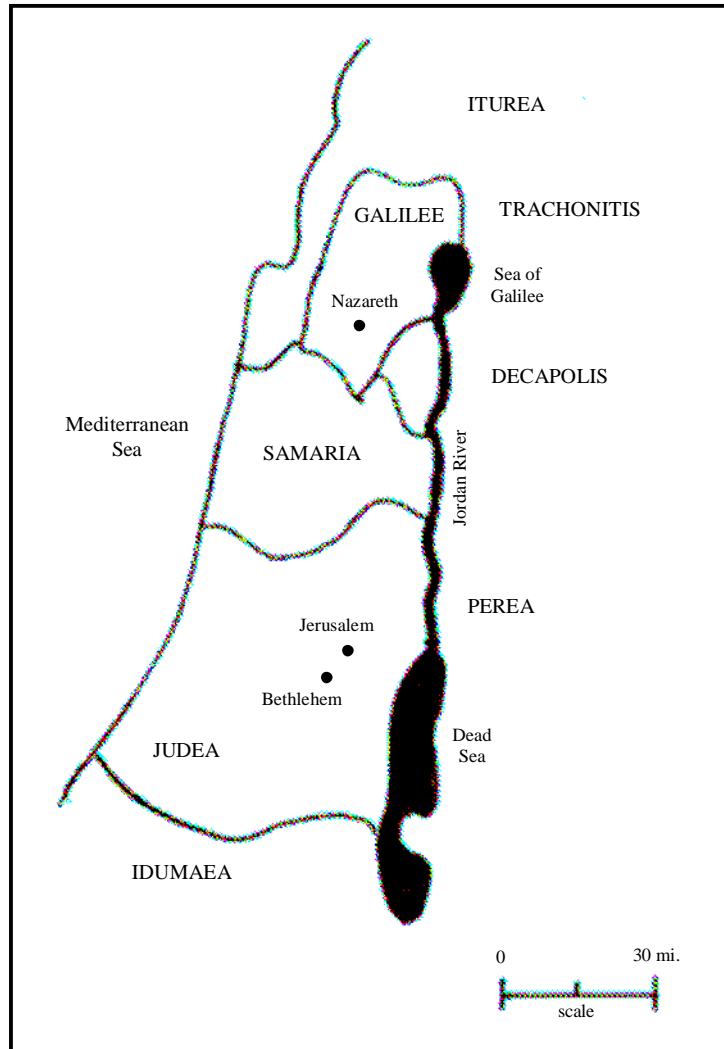
When Joseph became aware that Mary was pregnant he assumed that she had committed adultery and he sought to deal with the situation accordingly.

Adultery during the *kiddushin* stage was the same as with any fully married couple. As explained in the Mosaic Law of God, adultery could be punishable by stoning to death (Deuteronomy 22:20-24; Leviticus 20:10).

But, nonetheless, Joseph chose not to give Mary the harshest penalty of death by stoning. Instead, Joseph decided to **divorce her quietly** (Matthew 1:19 NIV), which was also permissible under the Law (Deuteronomy 24:1, Matthew 5:31-32).

However, God had another plan for Joseph and Mary. He sent an angel to speak to Joseph in a dream. He commanded Joseph to take Mary as his wife (Matthew 1:19-21).

Joseph *immediately* complied and brought Mary to his house to be his wife. Also, according to scripture, Joseph and Mary did not have intimate relations with each other until some time after Jesus was born (Matthew 1:18, 25).



Herod the Great's Kingdom, 4 BC

V. JOSEPH AND THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Jesus' birth in Bethlehem was foretold in prophecy (Micah 5:2) and was facilitated by Caesar Augustus' decree to have everyone in the Roman Empire be counted

in a census and pay taxes (Luke 2:1-4). This meant that Joseph, a descendant of the House of David, had to take his *entire* family with him to David's birthplace (Bethlehem) to be counted and taxed.

Thus, Joseph and the very pregnant Mary made the 70 to 80 mile trip on foot (Mary may have ridden a donkey.) from Nazareth to Bethlehem.¹⁰ They most likely traveled in a caravan as was typical for long-distance travel during that time because a caravan offered safety from bandits and other threats. See the map on the next page for reference points.

Jesus' birth in the manger in Bethlehem appears to have been fairly quiet and without a lot of fanfare. Scriptures says He was visited only by neighboring shepherds who were told of His birth by a host of angels. Scripture does not indicate that there were any other visitors (Luke 2:6-18).

According to Jewish Law, Jesus was circumcised when he was eight days old (Leviticus 12:3, Luke 2:21) and He was given the name Jesus just as God had commanded through the angels that visited Joseph and Mary (Luke 1:31, Matthew 1:21).

Later, when Jesus was forty days old, Joseph and Mary followed Jewish Law¹¹ and tradition and presented

¹⁰ Normal travel would be 20 miles a day. However, with Mary's advanced pregnancy, it would have taken a week or more. Rev. Phil Greetham, "Joseph and Bethlehem" *The Nativity Pages* (1996, 2002), http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/p_greetham/wisemen/ana2.html (accessed September 18, 2008).

¹¹ The Law of Moses cited in Luke 2:21-24, 39 refers to Leviticus 12:2-8: Circumcision of the male child would happen on the child's eighth day of life. After a son's birth there was a seven day period (14 days for girls) of the mother being ceremonially unclean, followed by a 33 day wait (66 days for girls) for the women to be purified from her bleeding. Afterward, a burnt offering was to be made by the priest in the temple for her atonement and for her cleansing.

Him in the temple in Jerusalem. A sacrifice was offered to God on Mary's behalf to atone for her and to cleanse her from the issue of blood associated with giving birth (Luke 2:21-39).

After Jesus was born, circumcised and dedicated, Joseph re-settled his family back in Nazareth (in Galilee in the north, see map). They had left Bethlehem and Jerusalem (in Judea in the south) (Luke 2:39).

III. JESUS AT TWO YEARS OF AGE

Some time later, the Magi (the so-called wise men) visited Joseph, Mary and Jesus and presented gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh (Matthew 2:10-11).

The Magi had seen **his star in the east and came to worship him**. First, they presented themselves to King Herod to inquire about where **the one who has been born king of the Jews** was born (Matthew 2:1-3).

King Herod was alarmed at the possibility of **the king of the Jews** which the Magi sought becoming a rival to himself for the throne. Herod quizzed the Magi about their quest to find the **king of the Jews**. Next, he inquired of the chief priest and scribes to learn about the prophecy (Micah 5:2) of the Messiah's birth (Matthew 2:3-6). :

Herod therefore sent the Magi to Bethlehem to find the **king of the Jews**. Herod told them to come back with details of where He could be found **so that I too may go and worship him** (Matthew 2:7-8).

The chronology of events indicates that the Magi could have been looking for Jesus for up to two years before they found him. The Bible shows that when the Magi actually found and visited Jesus, He was a **young child**.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him ...

Matthew 2:11 KJV

Notice that the scripture says "**the house**" and "**the young child**." Jesus was no longer a baby and they were in a **house** not a manger.

Contrary to popular beliefs and to Nativity scenes that have become a standard part of Christmas decorations, this visit by the Magi obviously did not take place in the manger in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth. It was probably in Joseph's home in Nazareth since that is where they returned after the baby Jesus was presented at the temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:39).

After the Magi visited the Messiah and his family, they were warned by God in a dream not to return to Herod, but to return by a different way (Matthew 2:12).

When it became apparent to Herod that the Magi were not going to report back to him, he became enraged. He **gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under** (Matthew 2:16 NIV).

Herod's command was **in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi** indicating that Jesus' birth was up to two years earlier.

IV. THE ESCAPE TO EGYPT

After the Magi left, Joseph had his second recorded dream where an angel visited him with a message from God. Joseph was warned that Herod wanted to kill the **young child**. Joseph was instructed to take his family to safety in Egypt.

Immediately, Joseph awoke from his sleep, prepared

Mary and Jesus and then left for Egypt (Matthew 2:13-14). Given the traveling routes of the time, this trip was about 350 miles one-way (on foot) from Nazareth to Egypt.¹²

After some time in Egypt, God spoke to Joseph a third time in a dream, telling him that Herod was dead and that they could return home.

The fourth dream occurred when Joseph became apprehensive about the new king in Judea, Herod's son Archelaus.¹³ God told Joseph to return to Galilee and to settle again in Nazareth (Matthew 2:19-23).

V. JESUS WAS OBEDIENT TO JOSEPH AND MARY

Further details about Joseph and about Jesus' childhood were not recorded in scripture after they returned from Egypt. The story picks up again when Jesus was 12 years old.

Joseph's family would annually travel 65 miles to Jerusalem to observe the Jewish feast of Passover then return to Nazareth. But, on this occasion Jesus did not immediately return with Joseph and Mary (and we can assume other children) after the festivities were over.

After a day's journey from Jerusalem, Joseph and Mary discovered that Jesus was not in their traveling company of relatives and friends. They had to return to

¹² Arthur Blessitt, "Miles Jesus and Mary Walked," *Official Website of Arthur Blessitt*, http://www.blessitt.com/?q=miles_jesus_and_mary_walked (accessed June 30, 2008).

¹³ Upon Herod the Great's death, the kingdom was divided between his three sons, Phillip, Antipas and Archelaus. Archelaus was over the regions of Judea and Samaria which Joseph, Mary and Jesus had to pass through to get back to the town (village) of Nazareth in the region of Galilee. Dennis Bratcher, "Palestine Under the Herods – New Testament Era," *The Voice: Biblical and Theological Resources for Growing Christians*, <http://cresourcei.org/herodrule.html> (accessed June 26, 2008).

Jerusalem to search for Him. It was three days before they found Him in the temple listening to and questioning the religious leaders who were amazed at His **understanding and answers** (Luke 2:46-47 KJV).

Scripture shows that Mary admonished Jesus for separating from the family. That is when He told His earthly parents the now famous quote "**I must be about my father's business.**" (Luke 2:49 KJV).

Afterward, Jesus returned with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth where he was **[habitually] obedient to them** (Luke 2:51 AMP) or **subject to them** (KJV) as is the proper relationship between parents and their children (Exodus 20:12).

VI. JESUS WAS JOSEPH'S SON

Jesus had come down from heaven to live amongst us and to lead a human life (John 1:1, 14) and as such, a normal and healthy human family life was appropriate. He would have led a seemingly common life until He embarked on His ministry.

It was not the type of situation where Jesus' deity was known, except to a very few (Joseph, Mary, Elizabeth, Zachariah, the Magi, Anna the Prophetess, Simeon and the shepherds).

From the time Jesus was born until Joseph's death, Jesus was a son in Joseph's family. Since God made Him human in form, He would have developed physically and intellectually as a human would. He ate, slept and cried as a human. He took part in all those family-life activities that were normal for a son in a Jewish family during that historical period.

They had a typical family life with father, mother and children. Joseph would have led his family in all things including prayers and devotions, in blessing the food at mealtime, in religious rituals as well as insuring that

everyone studied and knew the Law of God according to prevailing standards at the time. (For more on this topic see the chapter on *Godly Fatherhood Principle #5: Be a Teacher.*)

Thus, as best anyone knew, Joseph was Jesus' father (John 1:45). This is also evidenced in scripture when Jesus read the scroll of Isaiah during a service in the synagogue in Nazareth and then proclaimed His divinity. In disbelief that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the people questioned, "**Is not this Joseph's son?**" (Luke 4:22 KJV).¹⁴

VII. JOSEPH'S LIFESPAN AND FAMILY LEGACY

After the events in Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old, there is no further direct mention of Joseph in scripture. However, there are reasons to believe that Joseph lived for quite some time after Jesus' 12th year. We can extrapolate many facts from scripture about Joseph's lifespan and his role in Jesus' upbringing including the following.

First, when Jesus was twelve years old and he returned to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary the scripture tells us that:

¹⁴ In John 8 there is a long and intense argument where the Pharisees were questioning Jesus about His origin and Jesus exposed them as not being sons of Abraham, but sons of the devil, the father of lies. One of the Pharisees said, "**We are not illegitimate children ... The only Father we have is God himself.**" (John 8:41 NIV). The King James Bible reads, "**We be not born of fornication.**" Some people believe this to be a reference to alleged rumors that supposedly occurred when Mary conceived Jesus prior to her completing the marriage vows with Joseph. However, renowned scholars see this as a reference to the Pharisees' claim to be spiritual sons of Abraham. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1991. If the assertion that this statement by the Pharisees was an allegation about Jesus' virgin birth then we would have heard more about it in the scriptures.

He ... was ... [habitually] obedient to them ... Jesus increased in wisdom (in broad and full understanding) and in stature and years ...

Luke 2:51-52 AMP

This scripture indicates that Joseph was there for some period of time (for **years**) after Jesus' 12th year because Jesus was **habitually obedient** to **them** as he increased in **stature and years**.

Second, another interesting fact is that Joseph and Mary had at least eight children, including Jesus (which would have taken some number of years to procreate). How do we calculate the number of children born to Joseph and Mary?

Jesus' siblings (brothers) are named in Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55-56:

Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?

And his sisters, are they not all with us?

Matthew 13:55-56 KJV

That is four brothers and possibly three or more sisters. The reference to the sisters is **all**, which generally means three or more. Had the Bible said "both" we could assume two sisters. But, since it used the term **all** we can deduce that it is three or more sisters (See footnote for a more detailed explanation).¹⁵ So with four

¹⁵ Reference to Jesus sisters in Matthew 13:55-56. The Greek word for **all** is **pas**. This is #G3956 in the *Strong's Concordance*, which means *individually, each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything*. This is quiet different from the Greek word for **two** (#G1417) which is **duo**. It means *a*

brothers and at least three sisters, then the total number of siblings, including Jesus would be eight or more.

Scriptures confirms that all of these children belonged to Joseph and Mary because there is no mention of Joseph having been married prior to his marriage to Mary or of him having any children prior to Jesus' birth. If he had other children prior to Jesus' birth, they would have been accounted for when Joseph and Mary had to travel to their **own ancestral town** (of Bethlehem) to be counted and taxed in Caesar Augustus' census (Luke 2:1, 3 NLT).

Additionally, since Mary was a virgin, she could not have had children prior to Jesus and there is no indication that Mary married a second time. So she had no children after Joseph died.

Therefore, all of the children mentioned in the Bible as Jesus' siblings are attributed to Joseph and Mary jointly.

With eight total children, if each of the remaining seven births after Jesus occurred every two years then Jesus would have been 14 when the last sibling was born.¹⁶ If the births were three years apart then Jesus would have been 21 when His last sibling was born

primary numeral; two, both, twain and was used to refer to **the two** Zebedee brothers James and John in Matthew 4:21 KJV. The word **both** is used in John 20:4 to refer to Peter and John. This word **both** is translated from the same Greek word **duo** (#G1417). James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publications, 1990). Therefore, we interpret **all** as three or more and **two** and **both** as two. Thus, the speaker in Mathew 13:56 with the usage of the word **all** had to be referring to three or more sisters. If they meant less than three, they would have used the word **duo** for **both** or **two**.

¹⁶ This also confirms that when Jesus was 12 years old, Joseph and Mary had other children with them when they were returning from Jerusalem.

which indicates that Joseph possibly lived at least until Jesus reached adulthood.

Third, Jesus was trained to be a carpenter. This we know because Jesus was referred to as a **carpenter** in Mark 6:3. It is also most likely true since during that time period fathers usually trained their sons to follow in the same trade or profession. For Jesus to be fully trained as a carpenter He would have been an apprentice under Joseph well beyond his 12th year.

In fact, Jesus' training as an apprentice may not have started until he was around 15 years of age.¹⁷ As we will see later in the chapter on *Godly Fatherhood Principle #5: Be a Teacher*, Jesus was in school until he was at least 12 or 13. A full time apprenticeship to be carpenter could not have begun until some time after Jesus' 12th year, further indicating that Joseph was present far beyond that point because it would have taken several years for Jesus to learn the trade.

Joseph died¹⁸ somewhere before Jesus' 30th year as he was not mentioned in scripture when Jesus began His ministry (Luke 3:23). This is marked by Joseph not being present at the wedding feast where Jesus changed water into wine (John 2:1-11).

Nevertheless, whatever Joseph's age when he died, it is reasonable to conclude that he raised a full family with Mary, facilitated for Jesus' upbringing, and trained Him for manhood in the Jewish tradition.

¹⁷ Raymond T. Exum, "Jesus Christ, the Carpenter," (October 22, 1995), *Crystal Lake Church of Christ, Crystal Lake, Illinois*, <http://www.clcoc.org/inetserm/carpentr.htm>, (accessed May 27, 2008).

¹⁸ The reasonable assumption is that Joseph died as there was no mention of his exit through other means and as a righteous man, his exit through any other means is inconceivable. See the *Epilogue: Purpose Driven Father* for further discussion on Joseph's exit.

VI. JOSEPH FOLLOWED GOD'S AGENDA

We want to state conclusively that the discussion of Joseph's fatherhood role in this book is in no way intended to downplay or diminish the relationship between Jesus, the Messiah, and His own Father, the Almighty God. The Bible even tells us that God was with Jesus as He ***grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him*** (Luke 2:40 NIV).

This discussion of Joseph's fatherhood role is only to highlight the necessary role of an earthly father for Jesus who was both God and man. And - we use the example of Joseph to expound on Godly fatherhood principles for men to learn from today.

We conclude that God emphatically led Joseph in his fatherhood role of Jesus as with all of his estimated eight children. The impact of Joseph's Godly life could also be seen in his children, one of which was a James, Jesus' half-brother. He was a great warrior for the early church and was also one of the writers of the New Testament.¹⁹

In sum, Joseph's contribution worked according to God the Father's plan and the execution of the Holy Spirit. This is the way it should be for all fathers. We need to be on God's program for each of our children.

¹⁹ James the Righteous was the Bishop at Jerusalem. Prior to being martyred in 70 AD, God used him to write the Book of James in the New Testament.

GODLY FATHERHOOD

PRINCIPLE #1

BE A GODLY MAN

When writing this book, I was often asked why this chapter and the next chapter do not discuss fatherhood directly. There is a good reason for this: the foundation for being a Godly father is to be a Godly man and ideally a Godly husband as well.

Therefore, if this book were to jump right into the fatherhood aspect of Joseph's life without looking at his progression into that role then we would be missing some of the most important information about Joseph and about what it takes for men today to be Godly fathers.

I. WHAT IS A GODLY MAN?

A *Godly man* is a man who has a strong and close relationship with God. We discuss three aspects of that relationship in this chapter: (1) the most important is to believe in God, (2) spending time with God in prayer and the study of His Word is crucial to the development and maintenance of the relationship, and (3) a *Godly man* will have a Godly walk. That is, he will do what God says and he will live in God's way.

II. JOSEPH BELIEVED IN GOD

A. He knew the Lord

Joseph was a believer in God. We know this because he clearly observed divine laws as demonstrated by: (1) the birth and cleansing rituals that he and Mary followed after Jesus was born (Luke 2:21-24, 39); and (2) the fact

that each year his family traveled to Jerusalem to partake in the Feast of Passover as was the custom (Luke 2:41-42).

B. Joseph was a righteous man

Joseph had a close and strong relationship with God. The New International Version of the Bible tells us that Joseph was a **righteous** man:

... Joseph her husband was a righteous man

Matthew 1:19 NIV (underline added)

The King James Bible tells us that Joseph was a **just** man.

... Joseph her husband, being a just man ...

Matthew 1:19 KJV (underline added)

The words **righteous** from the NIV and **just** from the KJV are the same word. **Just** in the original New Testament Greek text is **dikaios** which means: *righteous, observing divine laws*.²⁰

The two Bible translations also use the same descriptive words for Noah, the man who **walked with God**.

Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

Genesis 6:9 KJV (underline added)²¹

²⁰ Strong's Concordance, (#G1342).

²¹ Strong's Concordance, (#H6662). **Just** in the original Old Testament Hebrew text is **tsaddiyq** which means: *just, lawful, righteous (justified and vindicated by God)*. Notice that both of the original words in Greek and in

Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people ...

Genesis 6:9 NIV (underline added)

Both Joseph and Noah are referred to as **a just man** in the KJV and as **a righteous man** in the NIV.

From this we see that the words **just** and **righteous** are interchangeable in these instances.

Furthermore, when looking at the question of being **righteous**, the man most identified with **righteousness** in the Bible is Abraham.

Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

Romans 4:3 KJV²²

Thus, Noah, Abraham and Joseph were all **righteous** - we see little or no difference in the words used by God in His Word to describe each of these three men of God.²³

Hebrew for the word **just** have "righteous" and a reference to being "lawful" as part of their meaning.

²² Strong's Concordance, (#G1343). **Righteousness** in the original Greek text is **dikaiosune** which means: *the condition acceptable to God*. Note that **dikaios** (G#1342) the word used to describe Joseph, is the root word for **dikaiosune**, the word used to describe Abraham.

An Old Testament reference to Abraham confirms this. **And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness** (Genesis 15:6 KJV). The original Old Testament Hebrew for **righteousness** is **tsēdaqah** (#H6666) which means: *justice, righteousness*. **Tsēdaqah** and **tsaddiyq** (#H6662), the word used to describe Noah, both have the same root word: **tsadaq** (#H6663) which means: *to be just, righteous*.

²³ In addition to Noah, Abraham and Joseph, other men referred to in the same manner as **just** or **righteous** in the Bible includes: Jesus (Luke 23:47), Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50-52), Abel (Hebrews 11:4) and Lot (2 Peter 2:7-8), John the Baptist (Mark 6:20), Cornelius (Acts 10:22).

Are we to believe that Joseph who was **just** (KJV) or **righteous** (NIV) had similar spiritual qualities as Abraham and Noah such as **faith, walking with God** and being a **friend of God**? Most certainly, yes!

C. Joseph was in an exclusive category of great men of Faith

It was Joseph's **faith** that enabled him to accept the explanation given to him by the angel when Mary was pregnant. It was also his faith that propelled him to obey God's command **to take Mary home as your wife**.

We know that Joseph had **faith** because the Bible tells us that:

The just shall live by faith.

Romans 1:17 KJV (underline added)

The righteous shall live by faith.

Romans 1:17 NIV (underline added)

Joseph's **faith** was not a casual **faith** in God, or what Jesus called **little faith**.²⁴ It was a great **faith**.²⁵

Joseph, like Abraham, demonstrated his **faith** when he believed God and obeyed God. Joseph believed that he would be the earthly father to the Son of God who would be born of a virgin birth (Matthew 1:20-23).

The Godly call on Joseph was enormous. Let us try to put it into perspective by briefly comparing God's call to Joseph to God's call to Noah and to Abraham.

God told Noah to make **thee an ark**, a 120-year endeavor, and to prepare for a hugely devastating rain and flood (Genesis 6:14-18).

²⁴ Strong's Concordance, **ojligopistiva** (G#3640), meaning: *trusting little, lacking confidence in God.*

²⁵ Strong's Concordance, **pistis** (G#4102), meaning: *the trust and conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things.*

God's promised Abraham that he would become the **father of many nations** even though he and Sarah were approaching the century mark in age and Sarah was barren.

An angel of God told Joseph that the Holy Spirit had impregnated Mary, that she was going have a virgin birth of the Messiah, and that Joseph would be the earthly father to the Son of God.

In each of these three cases, God commended them to believe a seemingly impossible promise for something that had never been done before.

The result was that God made a covenant for his people with Noah. God made another covenant for his people with Abraham. And, God made the new covenant for his people through the Son that Joseph raised.

Now, I ask you, which one of these stories or commands from God was the easiest or hardest to believe (the one given to Noah, to Abraham or to Joseph)? Of course, there is no answer to that question because each command was given to a special man of God who had been specifically prepared for that purpose.

God commanded these three men to believe in the impossible and all three are known for having believed and for fulfilling a crucial role in God's plan for salvation.

Of the great men and women of faith, God tells us that **These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised** (Hebrews 11:39 NIV). Certainly this was true of Joseph as well because by the time Jesus embarked on His ministry, Joseph was already home with the Lord in Heaven.

A Godly man today who follows Joseph's example will first of all - be a believer in God. That is, he will know the Lord Jesus Christ for himself. He will be righteous. He will have faith in God.

For those of you who do not have a relationship with God, please see the last page in this book titled, “Do You Have a Relationship with God?” to see how you can start a relationship with our Savior.

III. SPENDING TIME DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

In any relationship, spending time together is crucial to the development and maintenance of the relationship, as a relationship is made complete by what we do.

Using a marriage as an example, the fact that you are married defines the *type* of relationship that you have with your wife; but it does not define the *nature* of that relationship. For example, if you never spend time with your wife and you never do anything together, then that relationship is going to suffer and will be incomplete.

On the other hand, if you do lots of things with your wife, you spend quality time with her going to dinner, holding hands and doing other things that she enjoys, you tell her you love her everyday and you put nothing²⁶ before her (not football, not golf, not friends and not TV), then guess what? If you plan your life and time together, if you are generally available when she needs you and you listen to her when she talks, you respect her opinion, you comfort her when she is in need and she does the same for you, then your relationship with her will be complete! It is that simple.

God is the same way. He wants our love, our obedience, our worship, our prayers, our thoughts and our submission. He has told us that he is a jealous God and to not put other gods before Him.

²⁶ Except God, that is.

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation ...

Exodus 20:2-3, 5 KJV

Thus, it is vitally important that we spend time in God’s presence through prayer, studying His Word and worship to strengthen our relationship with Him.

In any relationship there are both challenges and rewards. The rewards from God come in various forms including (but not limited to) the fact that the ***Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you*** (Deuteronomy 31:6 NIV). This part of the relationship is especially important because when everything is okay *and also* when we have challenges, God leads us. He provides for us, He protects us and He also gives us discernment to understand what to do and how to do.

Let us see how Joseph nurtured his relationship with God.

A. Joseph knew the Word of God

Even though there were no printed Bibles in Joseph’s time, Joseph would have had several opportunities to learn and know the Word of God.²⁷ We

²⁷ Prior to mass printing, God’s Word came to the people through a number of avenues including God’s prophets and through dreams and visions. God also

know that he knew God's Word for the following reasons:

First, at minimum, Joseph would have heard the Word of God on the Sabbath throughout his youth and adult life as it was read from scrolls in the temples and synagogues.²⁸

Second, the Word of God was studied in the Hebrew schools. Joseph could have studied in these schools as a youth and beyond.²⁹

The formal study of God's word was done in the *Bet Sefer* (House of the Book) for students under 13 and in the *Bet Midrash* (House of Study) for older students. One author, on the issue of youth "disciples" knowing the Word of God wrote:

Since all disciples have memorized most, if not all of their Hebrew Scriptures in preparation for their Bar Mitzvahs at age 13, the issue was not what God's word said, rather what did it mean and how was it to be lived out.]³⁰

Thus, if Joseph was educated in the Hebrew tradition, he memorized large portions of scripture.³¹

spoke directly to individuals. He spoke face-to-face with Moses (Numbers 12:6-8 NIV, Hebrews 1:1 TLB). In Job 33:14-14, Job discussed several methods that God uses to reveal His will and to have His voice heard. Even the Apostle Paul wrote about how the Word of God is spread across the earth through preachers (Romans 10:13-18). Thus God's Word has largely been disseminated orally or through divine revelation.

²⁸ Additionally, some families had a scroll of a particular scripture in their home.

²⁹ More on Joseph's possible education in the chapter *Godly Fatherhood Principle #5: Be a Teacher*.

³⁰ Doug Greenwold, "Being a First-Century Disciple," *Bible.org*, http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=4867 (accessed February 18, 2009).

³¹ Pastor Lynda MacDonald, "Was Jesus Really a Rabbi?" *Bible Study With Pastor Lynda MacDonald of Nova Scotia*,

Third, Joseph and Mary clearly knew certain aspects of God Word as they followed the dictates of the Law of God as written by Moses after Jesus was born:

On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived.

When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord"), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: "a pair of doves or two young pigeons."

When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

Luke 2:21-24, 39 NIV (underline added)

Fourth, earlier we established that Joseph, as a **just** or **righteous man**, had **faith** in God. From this we can conclude that Joseph knew the Word of God because the Bible tells us that **faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God** (Romans 10:17 KJV).

Thus, as a **righteous** man, for Joseph to have **faith** in God he had to know God through His Word.

Fifth, Joseph spent quality time with God and would have heard from God directly when he was in His presence.

http://www.angelfire.com/me4/bread/h/LYNDA_rabbi.html (accessed June 9, 2008).

We can conclude this because Joseph would have followed the same general practices as the other great men of **faith** for which he is associated. We know that Noah³² and Abraham³³ spent time in God's presence, as it is well documented.³⁴

Spending time in God's presence is how Noah was able to **walk with God** and how Abraham got to be a **friend of God**. For Joseph to be **just** or **righteous**, like Noah and Abraham, he must have also spent significant time with God. Thus, he and God would have had a close relationship.

B. Joseph was a prayer warrior

We have concluded that Joseph had a healthy prayer life for the following reasons:

First, as a **righteous** man with a close relationship with God, Joseph would have naturally sought God through prayer as a means of keeping close to God.

Second, Joseph likely knew from the Word of God how God's people called out to God and had gotten answers. He would have done as the scripture says **if thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul** (Deuteronomy 4:23 KJV).

Joseph knew that if he followed God's instructions, like Moses and Joshua, God would be with him.

³² The KJV Bible records seven times of God speaking directly to or commanding Noah from Genesis 6 through Genesis 9.

³³ It was Abraham's normal custom to build an altar, make a sacrifice and worship the Lord (Genesis 12:7-9). He did this even prior to when the Lord change his name from Abram to Abraham (Genesis 17:5). Making sacrifices to God was so normal for Abraham that his son Isaac had been taught the custom. Therefore when Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac, Isaac questioned where was the animal for the sacrificed (Genesis 22:7).

³⁴ In fact, the Bible tells us that God appeared to Abraham (Genesis 12:7).

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

Have not I commanded you? Be strong, vigorous, and very courageous. Be not afraid, neither be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:5, 9 AMP

And, indeed, God was with Joseph wherever he went as God consistently gave Joseph direction through his dreams.

Third, in times of trouble, Joseph certainly would have gone to God for help and direction. As a man of God, he would have been down on his knees crying out to God about Mary's pregnancy, when Jesus was missing 12 years later and in all of the other situations and challenges that he faced. And, God answered Joseph with his messages through Joseph's dreams.

One example that we want to look at closely is when God told Joseph to return from Egypt. For the moment, put yourself in Joseph's sandals. Here you are in Egypt, hiding out because you have a little boy with you who happens to be the Son of God and your king wants to kill Him.

Next, the king dies and God says go home. Everything seems to be okay. You then start heading for home. But, you find out that the king's son is now in charge. You become concerned that the new king will try to kill the boy Jesus. What would you do?

But when he learned that the new ruler of Judea was Herod's son Archelaus, he was afraid to go there.

Matthew 2:22 NLT

Joseph was uncertain. He was **afraid to go there** even though Herod the Great was dead and the threat to Jesus' life was supposedly over.

Since God had been leading Joseph all along, it is reasonable to conclude that Joseph cried out to God through prayer to be sure everything was okay. Then God told him to return to Nazareth in **Galilee**.

Then, after being warned in a dream, he left for the region of Galilee.

Matthew 2:22 NLT

Joseph was like David in that instance. In Psalm 56 David cried out to God:

What time I am afraid, I will have confidence in and put my trust and reliance in You.

Psalm 56:3 AMP

Like David, Joseph knew that once he called out to God and put his faith and confidence in Him, he would be protected.

This is also similar to what happened with Daniel who prayed three times a day. Daniel cried out to God over Israel's plight and God sent the angel Gabriel to Daniel with a response (Daniel 9:10). At another time God gave Daniel a clear vision of things to come in his dream (Daniel 7).

Fourth, prayer was a normal activity for men of God. It has even been noted in scripture that the Pharisees (in Jesus' time) and their followers often prayed and fasted (Luke 5:33). Certainly if the Pharisees knew the importance of prayer then a **righteous** man like Joseph would have also known the importance of prayer.

We also note that Jesus was a prayer warrior. He spent many hours alone in quiet time with God (Luke

5:16 NIV). Could He have possibly seen Joseph in prayer and have learned as a youth to seek God and to stay in His heavenly Father's company? Was this one of the many things that Joseph taught the boy Jesus?

From this section we see clearly that developing and maintaining a relationship with God requires us to know the Word of God and spend time seeking God through prayer. We can also add praise and worship and fellowship with other Christians.

IV. JOSEPH HAD A GODLY WALK, HE DID THINGS GOD'S WAY

Joseph's Godly walk was demonstrated by the fact that God led him and he was obedient to God. Nothing came before his God, not his own understanding and not his own religion.

A. Joseph was led by God

The Bible informs us that **the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord** (Psalm 37:23 KJV). Clearly, Joseph's steps were **ordered by the Lord**. The Contemporary English Version of the Bible explains very well how Psalm 37:23 is applicable to the life of Joseph:

If you do what the Lord wants, he will make certain each step you take is sure.

Psalm 37:23 CEV

We can see how true this was as four times God sent an angel to appear to Joseph in his dreams.³⁵ It is noteworthy that when the angel appeared to Joseph, Joseph knew the messages were from God and each time he immediately obeyed God's instructions.

But how did Joseph know that it was God speaking

³⁵ Matthew 1:20-23; Matthew 2:13; Matthew 2:19-20; Matthew 2:22.

through the angel and not just an ordinary dream? Joseph's relationship with God is at the core of his understanding. He was used to hearing God's voice and being led by Him.

Repeating Psalm 37:23 again adds clarity to this verse, this time from the New Living Translation:

The Lord directs the steps of the godly.

Psalm 37:23 NLT

Joseph's example to fathers today demonstrates that when you have a close relationship with God then not only is God going to speak to you and lead you, but you will be able to hear when God speaks to you and also understand what He says to you. Thus you are enabled to travel a Godly path where you are protected and provided for.

B. Joseph was obedient to the will of God, He put his own will aside

Like Abraham and Noah³⁶ Joseph was an obedient servant. For example, as discussed earlier, when Joseph found that Mary was pregnant he had planned to put her away **quietly** by divorcing her. This was his *will* for himself. However, God had another plan. He commanded Joseph to marry Mary and thus to raise His Son.

This instance was the first, last and only time we hear of Joseph's own *will* for himself, and his own thoughts about what he wanted (or had decided) to do for himself. From then on, scripture only records Joseph's

³⁶ Genesis 6:22 NIV reads: **Noah did everything just as God commanded him.** Genesis 7:5 NIV: reads **And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him.**

acts of service to God's will in his role as husband and father.

C. Joseph trusted God above his own understanding

Like Joseph, if each of us is to be led by God then sometimes we have to put our **own understanding** aside. In Proverbs we are taught to:

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6 KJV

God can show us how to avoid danger, where to procure resources, people to distance ourselves from and much more if we just ask Him (James 1:5-6).

God certainly directed Joseph's path when his **understanding** was that Mary, his betrothed wife, had betrayed him. In his **own understanding** he had planned to call off the wedding and the marriage and move on with his life.

But God spoke to Joseph and brought a higher level of understanding to the situation. Joseph did not *argue* with God. He did not *ignore* God. He did what God said to do. He took Mary as his wife.

Joseph trusted in God and did not **lean** on his **own understanding**. If he had leaned on his **own understanding** then he and Mary would not have married. The consequences of which could have been enormous.

Joseph is a great example to men today because in times of grave trouble he trusted God and not himself.

As alarming as the situation with Mary's pregnancy was, Joseph was able to rely on (and believe in) God despite how the circumstances appeared.

And this is what men today need to do. When the bills pile up, the children are acting crazy, the job is frustrating and your wife is less-friendly, when the devil thinks he has you in his grip – go to God. He has the answer and He can elevate your thinking. It is like what Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

... Everyone can see that the glorious power within must be from God and is not our own.

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but not crushed and broken. We are perplexed because we don't know why things happen as they do, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going...

These troubles and sufferings of ours are, after all, quite small and won't last very long. Yet this short time of distress will result in God's richest blessing upon us forever and ever!

2 Corinthians 4:7, 8-9, 17 TLB

D. Joseph put his relationship with God above his own religion

Because Joseph followed the *will* of God, he was a man of God first, and a man of his religion second. If Joseph had followed the law of his religion first, when Mary became pregnant with Jesus and he was not the father, Joseph (as discussed in the previous chapter) could have had her put to death as an adulteress. But

he did not. He listened to God instead of his religion.

Joseph's religion also said he could divorce Mary. This was his plan, consistent with the Law of God. However, Joseph took Mary as his wife because God told him to do it. This shows that his relationship with God (and his trust and faith in God) was more important than the *rule* of his religion.

Today many of us need to take this lesson to heart as we often get too involved in religion and legalism and do not focus enough on our own relationship with God to lead us. Our hearts need to be prepared to hear from God so we can live a Godly life.

Finally, a Godly walk is demonstrated by being led by God, being obedient to God, trusting God in all things, and putting God before everything else.

V. IMPLEMENTING FATHERHOOD PRINCIPLE #1 BE A GODLY MAN

1. Be a believer in God.
2. Trust in God, have faith in Him.
3. Maintain a close relationship with God through time in His presence in prayer, and the study of His word.
4. Seek God at all times and in times of trouble
5. Follow God's will for your life.
6. Trust in the Lord above your own understanding.
7. Put your relationship with God above your religion.

GODLY FATHERHOOD

PRINCIPLE #2

BE A MAN OF CHARACTER

And her [promised] husband Joseph, being a just and upright man and not willing to expose her publicly and to shame and disgrace her, decided to repudiate and dismiss (divorce) her quietly and secretly.

Matthew 1:19 AMP

I. WHAT IS CHARACTER?

A man's character is dictated by his inner most traits. It is the essence of what determines inward thoughts and influences outward behavior toward other people. Character also defines your attitude and approach when faced with difficulties and personal challenges.

Some people have a character that is driven by their environment, that is, they have a pleasant public persona, but in private they are quite different.

Joseph was not like that. He was a true man of character in all situations because he allowed himself to be led by the Lord. In this chapter, we will see several aspects of Joseph's character by further examining his decision-making, especially when he faced the extreme situation of Mary being pregnant.

II. HOW JOSEPH DECIDED TO DIVORCE MARY

We do not know from scripture how Joseph found out about the pregnancy or even if Mary had tried to

explain it to him. We do know, however, that before he *understood and accepted* the truth of her pregnancy, he had decided to **dismiss (divorce) her quietly and secretly**.

Let us once again walk in Joseph's sandals to experience what his thought process might have been like as he made his decision.

As the story goes, the woman you are engaged to marry, the woman you think you are going to spend the rest of your life with – is found to be pregnant by another man.

Even if this was an arranged marriage, you must feel something. Are you heart-broken? Are you angry?

Just how are you going to react in this difficult situation? Would you get out of hand and go threatening to beat up somebody? Are you planning to throw a brick through someone's living room window? Or do you calmly contemplate the future?

You know that, consistent with the law, you could get revenge and have her put to death.³⁷ Can you see yourself in an agitated state as run through the streets of your town angrily yelling, "Put that woman to death! Stone her!" You would be within your legal and religious rights to do so.

Even though having her put to death is extreme, you consider it anyway. After all, look at what she did to you. You realize, however, that you do not want to hurt her; this is the woman you wanted to marry.

Next, you really feel the loss and you think about going ahead with the wedding and the marriage. You say to yourself, "I could forgive her. All will be well. We can

³⁷ Deuteronomy 22:20-21; Leviticus 20:10.

get married anyway." But, as you think about it, this option does not appear realistic and is not practical because it was not just an indiscretion that can be forgiven and forgotten. It is complicated by the fact that there is a child on the way.

Now, you don't know what to do or what your next move should be? You privately question what your family's reaction will be when they see that she did this terrible thing to you? And what are the neighbors going to say to each other when they find out that she disrespected you?

Are you at all open and ready to hear from God at this point?

Then, in a moment of rational thinking, you ask yourself, "What's best for everyone in this situation?" The answer comes to you. You have to let her go. Since you are a good man, you determine not to shame her publicly and not to have her stoned because that would harm both her and the unborn child.

That way she can get on with her life (with the other man – if that is what she really wants). And you can start over too.

To accomplish this solution, you choose a less harsh course of action, one that is not punitive or vengeful, you decide to divorce her **quietly and secretly**.

That is exactly what Joseph did because that was Joseph's character. He decided to let go and step aside. He took the high road, as they say.

Now let us look at what character traits Joseph's decision reflects.

III. JOSEPH WAS FORGIVING

Joseph's decision was generous and merciful given

the alternatives. It was not punitive. He did not seek revenge for the hurt or loss he believed he had suffered. His decision is a good example of Godly forgiveness because to forgive³⁸ means to let go.

In Romans, we are told that vengeance belongs to the Lord:

... never avenge yourselves, but leave the way open for [God's] wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay (requite), says the Lord.

Romans 12:19 AMP

Jesus taught Peter about forgiveness:

Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?"

"No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!"

Matthew 18:21-22 NLT (underline added)

Isn't it interesting that Joseph, thirty years earlier, was practicing what Our Lord Jesus Christ sought to teach the world - to forgive. This was Joseph's character. He followed God's example. Didn't God forgive Israel time and time again (Numbers 14:17-20)?

This is an example that we can follow - on a daily basis - forgiving when we are offended, insulted, disregarded or otherwise hurt. These are perfect opportunities to emulate Joseph's forgiving attitude and just let go without reacting negatively.

For example, often times married couples find

³⁸ The word **forgive** in Matthew 18:21 is the Greek word **aphieōmi** which means: *lay aside, leave, let (alone, be, go, have), omit, put (send) away, remit, suffer, yield up.* Strong's Concordance, (#G863).

themselves in an argument or disagreement that happens so quickly because one or both of them thinks that the other one did something wrong or hurtful. In many of these situations it is just a simple misunderstanding of what should be a tolerable difference of opinion. But, because we are so quick to respond we think and/or feel we have been insulted or offended.

In these cases, it is best to just walk away from a confrontation or conflict and let peace reign. Use this scripture as a rally cry when this happens to you.

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 15:1 NIV

When we do this, it will show our Godly character to others and make us stronger in the Lord.

IV. JOSEPH WAS HONEST – A MAN OF HIS WORD, A MAN OF INTEGRITY

Being honest is not about what you say. It is about what you do. However, what you do, should match what you say, and vice-versa.

People judge you on how well you keep your word. There's an old saying, "*your word is your bond.*" Another saying is "*say what you mean and mean what you say.*" The Bible shows this about God. It says that **God is not a man, that he should lie** (Numbers 23:19 KJV).

Since no words of Joseph are recorded in the Bible, how can we say that Joseph was a man of his word? Because Joseph had integrity and being a man of your word is about having integrity³⁹ and being honest. It is

³⁹ Integrity is *moral soundness; honesty; freedom from corrupting influence or motive.* <http://www.dictionary.com>, (accessed March 26, 2009).

about standing up for what you believe in, which is what Joseph did.

As a Jew, Joseph believed in the coming of the Messiah. When the Messiah came, Joseph was ready. As a Jew, he would have confessed in his religion that he loved God with all his heart (Deuteronomy 6:5) and he would have professed obedience to the one true God (Leviticus 18:4-5). When God called on him to serve, Joseph was ready.

Joseph stood up for his God and for his beliefs. When called upon, he stood by his woman and he gave of himself to follow the truth. That was being a man of his word, a man of integrity and a man of character. Some people would say that he “*practiced what he preached.*”

As men and fathers we need to follow this example. Be like Joseph and let your actions speak louder than your words. Let your actions be consistent with what you stand for - as you stand for **righteousness** in all aspects of your life - from how you conduct your relationships with others, to how you pay taxes.

For men today, this means we have to follow through on what we say. We have to honor our commitments and we have to be careful to only make promises that we can keep. There are times however, when we have to go back on our word. When that unavoidable situation occurs, the best thing to do is be up front and open with it. Make your apologies and do not leave anyone hanging.

V. JOSEPH WAS HUMBLE

Scripture shows us no instances of Joseph being prideful. In fact, scripture shows us clearly that Joseph was a humble man. We can see this through his obedience and perseverance, both are key ingredients for humility.

We see Joseph’s humility through his decision-making. At a time when Joseph’s life seemed to have changed drastically for the worse, he thought of others and what was best to do in that given situation. He did not think of himself first, or of getting revenge for the pain, suffering or humiliation he may have endured.

In Philippians, the Apostle Paul taught us about humility. He wrote:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:3-4 NIV (underline added)

This scripture describes Joseph’s attitude when he planned to deal with Mary’s pregnancy – no matter how much it hurt him?

We should not, however, mistake Joseph’s humility for weakness. Joseph was not a weak man. He was a courageous and strong man, empowered by God. How else could he have endured the path God carved out for him?

Humility is also a key ingredient to serving God. If you want to serve and be blessed by God – rid yourself of prideful behavior and submit yourself to our Lord.

Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

Proverbs 16:18 NIV

VI. JOSEPH WAS A COURAGEOUS AND STRONG MAN

A man of character is also a man of courage and strength. Joseph’s courage came from being a **righteous**

man. The Bible tells us that:

... the righteous are as bold as a lion.

Proverbs 28:1 NIV

Joseph's strength also came from God. He, like the Apostle Paul, relied on God's strength (not his own) to empower him. God's **strength is made perfect in weakness**⁴⁰ (2 Corinthians 12:9 KJV). Paul was speaking of being humble and not acting in his own strength. This certainly described Joseph.

Paul further explained that **when I am weak, then am I strong** (v. 10) because **the power of Christ may rest upon me** (v. 9).

In James 4:6 we are told that:

God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

James 4:6 KJV

Because Joseph was submitted to God he was able to follow God's commands even though those commands called for a high level of **faith** and personal sacrifice to marry Mary. That took courage to believe and boldness to comply with God's plan.

Joseph also had to have courage to take his family to safety in Egypt. Walking 350 miles (one way) must not have been easy. It took strength to believe and strength to complete what God had set for him to do.

We also see that when Joseph was afraid on the return from Egypt, he trusted in the Lord, where his strength came from. So he was humble – yet strong – allowing God's power to work in and through him.

⁴⁰ Strong's Concordance, (#769). The word **weakness** used here comes from the Greek word, **ajsqevneia**, which means: *want of strength (or absence of strength)*.

For the same type of Godly power in your life, be like Joseph and **look to the hills** where your help will come from (Psalm 121:1 CEV). This is how you will be able to be courageous and strong.

VII. JOSEPH WAS SHREWD AND INNOCENT

The New International Version of the Bible tells us that we should be both **shrewd** and **innocent**.

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

Matthew 10:16 NIV

This was part of the lesson that Jesus taught his twelve disciples before He sent them to witness to the **lost sheep of Israel** (Matthew 10:6).

The King James Bible presents this scripture a little different. It says:

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Matthew 10:16 KJV

Shrewd (or **wise**) simply means *intelligent, prudent, mindful of one's interests*.⁴¹ **Innocent** (or **harmless**) means *without a mixture of evil, free from guile, simple*.⁴²

Joseph was both **shrewd** (or **wise**) and **innocent** (or **harmless**) in his dealings with others. When he needed to be **shrewd** in taking care of his family, he was. When he needed to be **harmless** when dealing with Mary, he was.

Joseph's shrewdness showed when he needed to

⁴¹ Strong's Concordance, **Phronimos**, (#G5429).

⁴² Strong's Concordance, **Akeraios**, (#G185).

make a decision or get into action. He was not afraid to make a tough decision or follow a tough course of action. When God told him to do something (like fleeing to Egypt in the middle of the night), he did it without questioning or delay. This shows that he did not spend a lot of time second-guessing himself or others. He was generally confident and when he was uncertain, he went to God, got his answer and moved on, as evidenced when he was returning from Egypt.

As far as being **innocent** is concerned, we mentioned in the Introduction of this book that the Bible records no faults of Joseph like it does the other great men of God. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Joseph was humble. We see no instances of pride in him that are recorded in the Bible.

Since Joseph was human, we know that he was not perfect or sinless. But, for some reason, God chose not to blemish Joseph's record in the Bible with any wrongdoing. This, therefore, was probably not a significant aspect of his character because all accounts of Joseph are positive. He was a **just and upright man** (Matthew 1:19 AMP).

Joseph's example for men today is that we can stand tall and play hardball in life, in careers, and in business without having to be dishonest. You can be **shrewd** and be **innocent** at the same time and still prosper and win against the competition. After all if you have to cheat to prosper or win, then you really have not won. You have only stolen whatever you have gotten. That kind of life does not honor God nor does it reflect the character of a Godly man.

VIII. JOSEPH WAS A GENTLEMAN – HE HAD HIGH PERSONAL STANDARDS

One of the definitions of the term “gentlemen” is a

*well-mannered and considerate man with high standards of proper behavior.*⁴³ We can certainly see how this definition fits Joseph. He had high personal standards and he was surely concerned about doing things right.

First, we can see his high personal standards through the woman he chose to marry and have his children with. She was the best. How do we know that? She was a Godly woman and she was chosen by God to be His Son's mother. Joseph's standards were God's standards. You cannot get any better than that.

Second, when Joseph believed that Mary wronged him, he did not react negatively. He was in control of his behavior. His emotions and feelings did not get the best of him. He considered his course of action before reacting. He did not seek to put her down. He was even respectful of her in his decision.

Third, Joseph's decision to divorce Mary is also an example of integrity because a person without high standards would not have acted accordingly. He or she might be out name-calling and gossiping about the person who allegedly wronged him or her. But not Joseph, he acted with integrity, respect and uprightness. These are great qualities for men to copy.

We can be sure that if Joseph acted as a gentleman when he was under pressure then he must have acted similarly or even better when everything was all right.

Many of us men (young and mature) could benefit from a lesson on being a gentleman today. For example, I once saw an able-bodied man approach a two-way glass door at a bank while a woman with two children and a stroller struggled to get that door open from the other side. When the woman finally got the door open - the

⁴³ <http://www.dictionary.com>, (accessed March 25, 2009).

man just walked through the door as if the woman was holding it open for him.

Another example, how many times have you seen a bus (or subway car) full of men enjoying their seat while an elderly lady or a pregnant woman stood holding the handrail and swayed back and forth with the movement of the vehicle?

There are many more examples that I could give. You probably could also add a few examples yourself because this type of behavior has regrettably become commonplace. These examples are just the obvious examples of a loss of gentlemanliness on the part of our men. It is also the result of what some would call a lack of *home training*.

What are we teaching our youth about respect, manners and courtesy when we as men fail to lead by our own example? What legacy are we leaving and what can we expect for the future?

We men today need to change this in ourselves. We fathers need to teach our children, especially our sons to be gentlemen and to respect women and elders as well as each other.

IX. JOSEPH – A ROLE MODEL OF IMPECCABLE CHARACTER

We have a role model to follow in the example of Joseph the Carpenter. He showed us what character is as he always honored his God and others in his decision-making.

Although Joseph was not perfect, he modeled many qualities that men should strive for today.

X. IMPLEMENTING FATHERHOOD PRINCIPLE #2 BE A MAN OF CHARACTER

1. Do not be afraid to forgive others.
2. Be a man of your word. Say what you mean, mean what you say.
3. Stand up for what you believe in.
4. Be courageous and strong in the Lord.
5. Be humble.
6. Be wise, but pure – shrewd yet innocent as a dove.
7. Maintain the highest level of personal standards, integrity and honesty.

GODLY FATHERHOOD

PRINCIPLE #3

BE A GODLY HUSBAND

***... husbands ought to love their wives
as their own bodies ...***

Ephesians 5:28 NIV

Since God commanded the husband to love his wife as he would love himself then it is necessary to also know how God defined love. Today there are many misinterpretation of what it means to love.

In this chapter we look at God's definition of love and how the man is to love his wife. We also examine how Joseph lived up to the standards of being a Godly husband.

I. WHAT IS GODLY LOVE?

A. The attributes of love

Many people today seem to think that love is just an emotion or a feeling. If that were true then we would "fall" in and/or out of love solely based on how we *feel* from day-to-day and relationship-to-relationship.

Feelings and emotions are a very special part of a personal intimate relationship. However, feelings and emotions should never dominate our decision-making because feeling and emotions cannot sustain a relationship over the long haul. This is especially true given the challenges that marriages face today which

result in half of all marriages ending in divorce.⁴⁴

Love is a *decision* and it is an *action* that requires a *commitment*. God emphatically explained what true love is:

**Love is kind and patient,
never jealous, boastful,
proud, or rude.
Love isn't selfish
or quick tempered.
It doesn't keep a record
of wrongs that others do.
Love rejoices in the truth,
but not in evil.
Love is always supportive,
loyal, hopeful,
and trusting.
Love never fails!**

I Corinthians 13:4-8 NIV

From this scripture, we can see that each of the attributes of “real” love means giving of yourself or giving up of your self-centeredness, self-interest or selfishness for the person you love. That is why we can say “*to love is to give.*”

The fact is that we don't always *feel* like loving. But, if you have made a decision to love then your ability to love - by giving of yourself - is not dominated by how you feel.

This is critically important because too often people's feeling about a relationship can be based on lust, not love. That is, they feel more of “*What am I going to get out*

⁴⁴ According to the DivorceRate.org, the percentage of all marriages that end in divorce in the United States is approaching 50%. Marriages with children have a slightly lower rate. <http://www.divorcerate.org/> (accessed April 28, 2009).

of it?” And they think less of “*What am I going to put into it to help make it work?*”

B. God demonstrated His love

Continuing with the theme of “*to love is to give,*” when God defined His own love, He said:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16 KJV (underline added)

God so loved the world – that He did what? He **g-a-v-e!**

When Jesus defined love He said:

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13 KJV

Jesus said that to love is to **lay down his life**. In both of these scriptures *loving* is equated to *giving*. Again, this is why we say “*to love is to give*” because it is giving up your life for someone else.

C. God commanded the husband to love his wife the way Christ loved the church

In Ephesians we are taught how each of us should love our wife:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.

Ephesians 5:25 KJV (underline added)

This scripture also confirms the earlier point on *to love is to give*. Here, we are told specifically that a

husband should love his wife (according to how God showed His love) and the way Christ **loved the church, and gave himself for it.**

This is the framework for marriage, to love and to give. In successful Godly marriages there is a lot of giving of oneself to the other. Think of it this way, if you give to your wife and she gives to you - then neither of you has to TAKE from the other - because you are already receiving.

For a father, this means, he has to be willing to give up his life for both his wife and his children. In some cases that can be literal and in others it just means to be a giving person.

Examples of this includes making sacrifices for the family by working extra hours or an extra job to bring in enough money to support the family; or foregoing personal free time to play with the children or to help his son or daughter with a homework project, sports activity or academics pursuits. Part of the job description for a father is doing without some things he wants so his wife or children can have what they need.

D. Five languages of love

This book would not be complete without a discussion of how to express love in a personal relationship.

In his book, *The Five Love Languages*,⁴⁵ Gary Chapman teaches couples how to speak and how to understand their mate's love languages. Those five languages are:

(1) *words of affirmation*: telling her how much you

⁴⁵ Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*, (Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing, 1995).

appreciate her and what she does, expressing gratitude for well she does something, compliments on her hair or clothes, and especially telling her how you feel about her;

(2) *quality time*: focusing your time and energy on her and also on her needs, communication (with eye contact), sharing feelings, thoughts and experiences; listening (not solving problems – but listening);

(3) *receiving gifts*: giving gifts as a expression of love and appreciation (within your budget of course), including the gift of self and time;

(4) *acts of services*: chores done out of love not obligation, from the simple and necessary chores to the special chores specifically for your mate, know what our mate likes or you could be speaking the wrong language (i.e. washing the car will not be appreciated if your mate wants the dishes done); and

(5) *physical touch*: more than just sexual intercourse is important to most people, physical closeness is appreciated in various ways, know what you your mate likes and where and what is important to her, know how she does not like to be touched so that you will not be irritating to her.

Do you know your mate's love languages, how she speaks them or how she likes to receive them? Do you know your own way of speaking and how you like to receive?

Gary's book and his website can be great tools for developing your abilities in this area. (See www.FiveLoveLanguages.com) Also, see our website to get a copy of his book (www.rFathers.net).

II. JOSEPH WAS A GODLY HUSBAND

A. Joseph laid down his life

First, Joseph initially gave of himself when he was willing to step aside and he refused to have Mary punished. In the previous chapter we said this action by Joseph was an example of Godly forgiveness. Forgiveness is an act of love, an act of giving up of one's self interest.

He who covers and forgives an offense seeks love ...

Proverbs 17:9 AMP (underline added)

and

It [love] doesn't keep a record of wrongs that others do.

1 Corinthians 13:5 NIV

Second, Joseph showed his true love for God as he ***laid down his life*** for God - and for Mary and Jesus when he took Mary to be his wife. It is as if he said to God, "Take me Lord, use me, I'm yours. Tell me what you want me to do and I will do it."

After the dream where Joseph was told about God's plan, he would have gotten up from his sleep in a hurry. He would have enthusiastically gone in the middle of the night⁴⁶ (or early the next day) to get his woman and bring

⁴⁶ It would not have been un-common for Joseph to go in the middle of the night to get Mary. According to ancient Jewish marriage rituals, the bridegroom would come with an entourage to get his bride. Every attempt was made to surprise the bride and her family as to the time of his coming, which often meant coming in the middle of the night. Upon arrival of the bridegroom's party at the bride's family's house, the bridegroom party would announce their arrival with a shout or the blowing of a shofar (trumpet made from a ram's horn). Bill Risk, "The Ultimate Wedding: Ancient Jewish Marriage Traditions – Their Fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah," *Lambert Dolphin's Library*,

her home to be with him. The Bible says:

Then Joseph, being aroused from his sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him: he took [her to his side as] his wife.

Matthew 1:24 AMP

As Joseph went in the bridegroom's party to get Mary, he probably had a rush of thoughts in anticipation of the sacrificial life that was before him:

- He would have realized that it was God's plan all along that he and Mary would be together.
- He would have been very relieved that his beloved had not betrayed him.
- He would have been elated that he did not have to divorce Mary and that she would be his wife after all.
- He would have been excited about the coming adventure of having this special family and the impending challenges that would come.
- His feelings for Mary might have deepened as he reflected on the fact that she was chosen to be God's Son's mother.
- He would have felt empathy for her as he thought about what she was going through - and then he would have quickened his pace to get to her.

Third, Joseph clearly laid ***down his life*** for Jesus. He would have become acutely aware of this as he

<http://www.ldolphin.org/risk/ult.shtml> (accessed May 23, 2008). (The Jewish wedding tradition of the bridegroom coming without warning is also the basis of the Lord's description of when the bridegroom Jesus will come for His bride, the Church, and be signaled by the blowing of a trumpet (Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; John 3:29; Ephesians 5:27-32).)

returned home with the pregnant Mary. It would have come to his mind that it was also God's will that he raise God's son. This alone would humble any man. He might have also wondered about his role as provider, protector and teacher of the yet unborn baby boy that would rise up to save the world.

B. Joseph gave his wife to God before he joined with her

Joseph did what every man should do. He gave his wife to God before joining with her. First, prior to the virgin conception (Luke 1:35), Joseph had ceremonially given his bride to God for consecration as part of entering the *kiddushin* stage of their marriage.

The *kiddushin* stage, when they were technically married – but not yet living together, was a time of purification for the bride. It could have included a *mikveh*, a purifying bath for spiritual cleansing. This religious ritual where the bride would be totally immersed in water would be just prior to the *nissuin* ceremony that completed the marriage process.⁴⁷

Second, after the virgin conception Joseph was commanded to marry Mary. This meant he would not be able to join with her until after Jesus was born (Matthew 1:25). Thus, he gave his wife to God a second time.

You might think that God took Mary first, then Joseph was asked afterward. On the surface, that appears to be true. However, Joseph had a choice and he made a decision. Therefore, Joseph's obedience to God was a giving of his wife to God before he joined with her.

Today a man can privately give his wife to God before joining with her through a prayer and the dedication of

⁴⁷ Risk, "Ultimate Wedding: Ancient Jewish Marriage Traditions."

the marriage to serve God.

The husband and wife can have a private moment between themselves and God just prior to their wedding day or just after the ceremony - before they come together. It can even be part of the wedding ceremony. The husband would pray over his wife stating that she is God's first and his second.

When the husband gives his wife to God first, before joining with her, it is acknowledges to God (and to themselves) that the marriage is a gift from God (Proverbs 19:14). It also is an acknowledgement that she belonged to God even before he came along. It demonstrates that the husband knows that the woman still belongs to God and not to him (Psalm 24:1).

As a result this dedication of his wife and the marriage, the husband is more likely to take better care of his wife and love her more completely than if she were his alone. Please do not take this suggestion lightly. Women are special and should be treated in a special way. Men, you should treasure your wife and your marriage as a special gift from God.

The man who finds a wife finds a good thing; she is a blessing to him from the Lord.

Proverbs 18:22 TLB

Follow this example of dedicating your wife and your marriage before God and you will be richly rewarded! The important thing is do this from our heart when you jointly come together to confess your love for God.

If you are already married and you did not go through this – do it now. Surprise your wife with a special private ceremony and prayer. Rededicate your marriage. Let both God and your wife know that you love her as God's and you thank God for his gift to you.

III. JOSEPH AND MARY'S GODLY MARRIAGE

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 4:21 NIV

In a Godly marriage, the husband and the wife are submitted to God, to each other, to the marriage itself, and to the Godly order of marriage.

In the special case of Joseph and Mary, they were able to get married *only because* they had first submitted themselves to God and His plan for Jesus' birth and upbringing.

We are told very little in the Bible about Joseph and Mary's marriage. However, the fact that it was a Godly marriage lends itself to certain general understandings. Additionally, having seen through scripture the type of man Joseph was provides specificity on the principles on which he operated. Thus, we can construct an appreciation for the marriage life of this Godly couple.

A. Who was Mary? What was her character?

In this book we do not discuss Mary to a large extent because the focus is on her husband and the fatherhood principles that he exemplified. However, we need to know who Mary was as she and Joseph are one of the most well-known married couples in history.

We know that Mary was a Godly woman because God would not have chosen an un-Godly woman to be His Son's mother. But, what qualities would God want in a woman for His own Child's mother?

There is little to describe Mary in the Bible beyond her being a virgin. However, plenty can be extrapolated. First, let us look at the conversation between the angel Gabriel and Mary.

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

Luke 1:28 KJV

When the angel Gabriel greeted Mary he said three things about her that tells us what God thought about her: (1) she was **highly favored**, (2) **the Lord is with thee**: and (3) **blessed art thou among women**. Thus, we know from the descriptive greeting that God was **with** her, that she was **blessed** and **highly favored**.

After the angel Gabriel told Mary of God's plan, Mary spoke of herself as a **handmaid of the Lord** (v. 38). Thus we know from Mary's own words that she saw herself as a servant of God and that she felt very privileged to be chosen to carry, birth and raise God's Son.

Clearly Mary, like Joseph, had a close relationship with God. She was a servant of God and she was blessed and favored by God.

B. Joseph and Mary were equally yoked

The Bible tells us that marriage partners should be equally **yoked**. That is, believers should marry believers:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

2 Corinthians 6:14 KJV

In every Godly marriage there are actually three people: God, the husband and the wife. As with both Joseph and Mary, the husband and the wife must each have an independent relationship with the Lord. Both

need to know God for themselves.

No doubt Joseph and Mary were equally yoked. They were both believers and servants of the one true God.

The fact that they were equally yoked is further demonstrated by their independent reactions to God's plan. When God sent an angel to each of them to tell them individually of His plan for their lives, both understood the importance of what they had been chosen for. Both of them said yes – without delay – and without doubting. God knew their hearts as each of them had undoubtedly been prepared for this life of service.

We can also conclude that both Joseph and Mary had already been tested by God as part of their preparation for the life responsibility that God gave them. Why, because God tests the faith of all believers. Abraham was tested (Genesis 22:1, Hebrews 11:17). The Israelites were tested in the dessert (Hebrews 3:8). Even Jesus was tested (Mathew 4:1)! In the book of James we are told:

Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations.

Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience.

But let endurance and steadfastness and patience have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing.

James 1:2-4 AMP

Notice that the scripture says **whenever you are enveloped**. It does not say, "IF you are tested". So the understanding is that all believers will **encounter trials of any sort or fall into various temptations** so that they become **fully developed ... lacking in nothing**. Joseph and Mary had each past the test of their faith and were **satisfactory to Him** (Hebrews 11:6 AMP).

We can therefore conclude that God made sure that this couple was equally yoked so that His Son would grow up in the most appropriate family environment.

C. Joseph was the leader in the family

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Ephesians 4:21-24 NIV

In the next chapter, *Godly Fatherhood Principle #3: Be a Family Man*, we discuss further the role of the husband as the leader of the family and the wife as **help meet** (KJV) or **helper** (NIV) according to the order established by God in Genesis 2:18. For now, let it suffice to say that when God established the woman as the **help meet** or **helper** He was establishing the man as head of the family.

Since this is the Godly order, we know that Mary was submitted to Joseph's leadership in the family. We can see this in their marriage through the following:

First, Joseph received his direction from God – not from Mary (even though she was the mother of God's Son).

This can be seen from the first day when Joseph was commanded by God to take Mary to be his wife. God spoke to Joseph to tell him of why and how Mary was pregnant. The Bible does not record any conversations between Joseph and Mary so even if Mary did try to explain, it was God's message to Joseph that caused Joseph to understand and to act.

This pattern continued even after they completed the marriage process with the *nissuin* ceremony. God continued to speak directly to Joseph giving him commands and direction. An example of this is when God sent the family to Egypt and when He told them to return. The messages came to Joseph through his dreams.

As fathers we need to be prepared for direct communication with God.⁴⁸ This happens when we, like Joseph, are truly humble servants of the one true living God. This is where our direction is supposed to come from.

⁴⁸ Let us be clear, however. First, this does not mean that God will not use the wife to speak to the husband sometimes. In fact, God will use the wife to speak to the husband on occasion, just as He will use another person or situation to tell or show the husband something. However, both the husband and the wife need to be mature enough to know that when or if God uses the wife in this way, she does not usurp authority to become the leader. She is the messenger, the conduit for the message. Second, God will sometimes speak jointly to both the husband and the wife at (or near) the same time. Third, God will also speak independently to the wife – but not in conflict with her husband's Godly leadership.

Second, we see Joseph leading and making decisions as head of the family. Again, starting with his first decision to follow God's command and spare Mary from the divorce he had planned. His decision to be obedient affected everyone and set the tone for the family. Joseph obeyed God, then Mary followed him as he brought her to be with him to put her under his covering. Just imagine how the pregnant Mary felt when Joseph came in the middle of night to get her and bring her home.

Of course none of this means that the husband should ignore what his wife has to say. Quite the contrary, the husband and the wife are a team. Each team member has a voice that should be heard by the other. But the husband has the last word and is the leader.

If the husband is smart (Godly smart that is), he will use his authority wisely. The wife will have plenty of responsibility and they will discuss all major decisions and even small ones. The husband will even yield to his wife's way of doing things whenever possible because in many, many instances (a) she might know better than him, and (b) the consequences of the decisions are not monumental. It also helps to keep peace.

A wise husband will know when to exert his authority in opposition to his wife and when not to. Just because the husband is the head of the house does not mean that he knows it all. If they are truly a team they will communicate and cooperate – thus they will learn from each other.

D. The quality of their marriage

The marriage between Joseph and Mary was a very special marriage with a special anointing. It is quite possible that even if their marriage was an arranged marriage, the ingredients for a very loving relationship

was also there.

This Godly couple was put together to jointly face the challenges of parenting His only Son. Not only did they face challenges, as evidenced by the events leading up to and following Jesus' birth, but, you can be sure that they were blessed for their obedience as God's Word tells us that He rewards obedience (Leviticus 26:3-46, 1 John 3:22-24). We can see this through the following:

First, with all that they went through together in Godly service and with the special anointing on their marriage, their bond with one another could have easily developed into a very strong and deep personal closeness and mutual love for each other.

Second, recognizing that God's order is celibacy before marriage, and that He rewards obedience, we can assume that God blessed Joseph and Mary in all aspects of their personal relationship.

Third, the fruits of this marriage union can also be seen in the seven or more children that they had together (in addition to Jesus).

Fourth, their marriage probably had good communication and a healthy expression of their feelings. We can see from how Joseph deliberated on Mary's pregnancy that he was a sensitive man.⁴⁹ As such Joseph tried to do the right thing without hurting anyone anymore than what had already occurred. He was sensitive to the fact that disgracing Mary would hurt her – which he did not want to do – even though (in his mind) she had hurt him. This type of sensitivity to others (especially in that situation) indicates that Joseph

⁴⁹ Sensitive does not mean soft. Here it refers to his ability to understand issues at hand and respond in a humane manner. One of the definitions of sensitive at www.dictionary.com is *susceptible to the attitudes, feelings, or circumstances of others*.

was most likely not closed off and rigid to his own feelings and that of others.

Men, follow Joseph, be sensitive to the feelings of your wife and you too will be rewarded in your relationship with her. She will be more open to you, and consequently she will be more trusting and better able to relate to you and your needs.

IV. IMPLEMENTING FATHERHOOD PRINCIPLE #3 BE A GODLY HUSBAND

1. Study the meaning of love.
2. Be equally yoked with your wife. Chose a Godly woman to be your wife.
3. Practice abstinence, maintain celibacy until marriage.
4. Submit your marriage to God. Give your wife to God first, before you take her to yourself.
5. Be the leader in the family.
6. Lay down your life for your wife. Love her, like Christ loved the church.
7. Be sensitive to her feelings.

GODLY FATHERHOOD

PRINCIPLE #4

BE A GODLY FAMILY MAN

The term *family man* generally means a father who is devoted to his family and spends time doing things with them. However, the role of a *Godly father* or a *Godly family man* goes a lot deeper than that, especially when one considers God's requirements on men and fathers.

Thus, a *Godly family man* is one who is: first, a *servant* to God, second, a *Godly steward*, and third, the *Godly leader* in his family.

In this chapter we examine the first family man Adam, in comparison to Joseph, to show what it means to be a Godly family man.

I. A "GODLY FAMILY MAN" IS A SERVANT OF GOD

A *Godly family man* is first of all a *Godly man* and as such he is serving God. In the chapter *Godly Fatherhood Principle #1: Be a Godly Man* we showed how the Godly man Joseph was obedient to the will of God and that he served God. Therefore fathers today need to put their own will aside to serve the Lord. With this foundation men are better prepared for the fatherhood role.

A. What does it mean to serve God?

Generally, good servants put the interests of their masters above their own interests and their own desires. They must have an attitude and temperament to obey whomever they serve.

Specifically, a true servant of God is obedient to God

and has faith in God. He relies and trusts in God because God provides the ability and resources to complete whatever He called His servants to do on His behalf (1 Corinthians 9:7-14, Genesis 22:8, 13-14).

B. Joseph was a servant of God

As we have seen, Joseph believed God and followed God's commands: first, by giving up his life for God; second, by how God led him through the process of marrying Mary; and third, by how he protected Mary and Jesus.

Joseph understood what it means to serve God. It is because he remained faithful and committed to serve God that he was prepared to lean on God in every situation in his life, especially when times were difficult and when he was under attack.

A man today cannot be a true Godly family man without serving God and being a Godly man first. Thus, being a Godly family man is not just about spending time with our families, which we must do. Real devotion to our families will show through adherence to the components of this principle on being a Godly family man.

II. A "GODLY FAMILY MAN" IS A GODLY STEWARD

A. What is a steward?

A steward is someone who manages the property, finances or other affairs for another person.⁵⁰ In addition, a good steward provides safety for whatever has been placed in the steward's care.

Furthermore, in the Parable of the Talents, God established that a Godly steward must also develop and

⁵⁰ Dictionary.com, <http://www.dictionary.com> (accessed April 2, 2009).

build on what God has given him to take care of.

In this parable the master gave each of three servants money to manage for him. Two of the servants made a profit for the master while the third hid the money in fear that he would lose it. The master rewarded the first two servants and punished the **wicked** and **lazy** third servant (Matthew 25:13-30). Therefore, we conclude that a Godly steward not only takes care of what was entrusted to him, but he also develops and builds on it.

B. Everything belongs to God and comes from Him – We are just stewards

We own nothing. Everything we have belongs to God. The Psalmist David expressed it this way:

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.

Psalm 24:1 NLT

Since everything belongs to God, then it is also true that for us to have anything then it has to be given to us by God. John the Baptist expressed it well:

No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven.

John 3:27 NLT

Consequently, we are just stewards over whatever we have, including our families. Therefore, if we are to be effective and be Godly stewards over the families that have been given to us, then we must take care of them and work to help them develop in all areas of their lives.

C. Fathers are stewards over the spiritual health of the family

A Godly steward is also responsible for the spiritual

health of his family and each member of the family. That is, the father will help to safeguard the family by directing prayer and devotions as well as seeing to the spiritual education and development of everyone in the family.

As Joshua said when he was challenging the nation of Israel to be faithful to God:

... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Joshua 24:15 KJV

Today, Godly stewardship is largely evident through attendance in church services, fellowships, spiritual growth classes, Bible study, family devotions and prayer.

However, the first and most important aspect of spiritual health is being a Born-Again saved Christian, that is, to accept Jesus as Lord and Master. Without this first step, one cannot really develop spiritually. Fathers must help create the opportunity for their children to be saved – or they themselves must lead their children to Christ.

D. Adam was the first steward over a family

The model for good stewardship in the family began with Adam. God gave Adam a woman of which he was to be a good steward over.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Genesis 2:18 KJV

Adam, joyfully proclaimed: **bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh** when the **Lord God ... made he a woman and brought her unto** him (Genesis 2:22-23 KJV). Adam was excited to see Eve. She was his ideal companion and having been made from his rib, she was

already a *part* of him.

As a Godly steward over Eve, Adam would have had the responsibility of training her to function in the garden. He would have explained and interpreted all of the instructions that God had given to him prior to her arrival, including what they could do and what they could not do.

Assumingly, it was Adam who had to make sure that Eve knew God's rule to **not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil** (Genesis 2:17). And since we know that Adam was responsible for the adherence to this rule and for seeing to her spiritual development, then part of his stewardship role was to help Eve stay in line with God's Word.

E. Joseph was a steward over his family

With Joseph it is easy to see how he was a steward over his family because, like Adam, Joseph's family was clearly given to him by the Lord. Joseph had given up on Mary and God restored her to him. Jesus was not his biological son, yet Joseph was responsible for His upbringing.

Because Joseph had an attitude of Godly service, as all fathers should, he understood that what was given to him by God was not his. It therefore followed that he would be a good steward over God's family, God's money and God's plan for Jesus' earthly upbringing. (We discuss more on stewardship in the chapter on *Godly Fatherhood Principle #6: Be a Provider.*)

Joseph clearly showed his stewardship over his family when he sought to take care of them by: first, taking Mary home to give her covering; second, protecting his family when he took them to Egypt; third, by searching for the 12 year old Jesus when He was

missing; and fourth, by using his trade as a carpenter to provide for his family.

Thus, the challenge of being a Godly steward over the family God gave to you means taking care of their well being, providing for them, protecting them and seeing to their spiritual health.

III. A “GODLY FAMILY MAN” IS THE LEADER OF THE FAMILY

A. Godly order for the family

God established His order for the family with the first family of Adam and Eve. He clearly established the husband as the head of the family when he created Adam first and gave him a blueprint.

God’s family order was evidenced before Eve’s arrival by the following:

First, God created Adam and then He placed Adam in the garden and gave him a responsibility (or job).

And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it ...

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field ...

Genesis 2:15, 20 KJV

Second, God gave the first man a rule to follow. He told him ***you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*** (Genesis 2:16 NIV).

Third, God defined the roles for both Adam and Eve. He definitively placed Eve under Adam's authority when, before Eve was created, He defined her role as a ***help***

meet⁵¹ (Genesis 2:18, 20 KJV) or a ***helper*** (NIV) for Adam.

And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

Genesis 2:18 KJV)

Further evidence of the God’s family order happened after Eve’s arrival:

Fourth, Adam gave his wife her name (Genesis 3:30), thus signifying that Eve was under Adam. (This practice continues still today when the wife takes the husband’s last name.) Adam had previously given her the title of ***woman*** right after God made her (Genesis 2:23).

Fifth, when the first couple sinned it was Adam who was held responsible. When God came to see them after they ate the forbidden fruit, the Bible tells us that the ***Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?*** (Genesis 3:9 KJV, underline added). God came looking for Adam - not Eve.

This point was emphasized again when ***the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden ... he drove the man out...*** (Genesis 3:23 NIV, underline added). The Bible says Adam was driven out not Eve (they left together – under his leadership). Clearly God held the man responsible for the actions of himself and his wife. Thus, the husband is responsible for the family.

Sixth, God further underscored the fact that husbands receive their instructions from God when He chastised Adam for following Eve. God said,

⁵¹ Strong's Concordance, The original Hebrew word is ***êzer*** (#G5828), which means: *succour (succor) or one who helps.*

...Because you have listened and given heed to the voice of your wife ... the ground is under a curse because of you ...

Genesis 3:17 AMP

When Adam was the only human on earth, God spoke directly to him. God did not change the order when Eve arrived. However, things got out of order when Adam followed Eve and he **eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**.

B. Joseph was the leader in his family

Following the pattern established by God with Adam, authority and leadership rested with Joseph as the head of his family. This was evidenced by the following:

First, God spoke directly to Joseph with instructions. We see this when he told him about Mary's pregnancy. God commanded Joseph to marry Mary (Matthew 1:20-21). Also, when Herod wanted to kill Jesus, God instructed Joseph, not Mary, on what to do (Matthew 2:13-14, 19-23).

Second, God held Joseph responsible for the family. This was evident when (unknown to them) the pregnant Mary needed to get to Bethlehem to give birth (to fulfill prophecy), and when they fled to Egypt and returned. In both instances, Joseph had to plan, prepare and lead his family to where they were going.

Third, Joseph was responsible to lead his family when the dictates of the Law needed to be observed. This included taking Mary and Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem after Jesus was born to do **everything required by the Law of the Lord** (Luke 2:39 NIV). It also included the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover (Luke 2:41 NIV) and other feast.

IV. FROM SERVANT - TO STEWARD - TO LEADER

A. How service leads to leadership

We can see from Joseph's example that as fathers the mere act of serving God means leading others. That is, one leads to the other.

First, being an obedient servant to God meant that he had to take care of the family that God gave to him. Thus, he was automatically a steward over his family.

Second, Joseph's stewardship role over his family included leading them to achieve God's purposes. That is, Godly leadership emanated from his stewardship responsibilities.

Therefore, we conclude that for husbands and fathers today - service to God means leading your family in Godly ways for Godly results. It boils down to this:

1. When you are a servant of God - you will be a Godly steward over your family; and
2. When you are a Godly steward over your family - you will be the Godly leader of your family.

Don't complicate this. Start with service - continue with stewardship - and be the leader.

B. The servant-leadership crisis

Right here we want to coin a phrase "the servant-leadership crisis." We define this as *failed leadership that results from a failure to serve*.

It is like when you leave your children in the care of a baby-sitter and upon your return you find that the house is all torn up and the baby has pooped all over the white living room carpet. Who are you going to blame, the children? No, you blame the baby-sitter. Why? Because the baby-sitter: (a) failed to serve your interest

while you were gone, (b) failed to take proper care of (or stewardship over) the children, and (c) failed to lead them in what they were suppose to do.

The baby-sitter suffered a servant-leadership crisis. However, had the baby-sitter followed the first requirement to serve your interest, then all else would have followed.

This is exactly the point with fathers serving God. If we abdicate on serving, we can easily abdicate on stewardship and thus on leadership.

This is the main problem we have in society today – husbands and fathers have had a collective servant-leadership crisis. That is, too many fathers have failed to truly serve God. Thus, Godly stewardship and Godly leadership (from the father) is missing in far too many instances.

C. Adam suffered a servant-leadership crisis

On the issue of obeying God's command to ***not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil***, Adam had a servant-leadership crisis. Consequently, both he and Eve sinned. Let's examine the last portion of the scripture as it unfolded to see what happened:

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Genesis 3:6 NIV (underline added)

Notice the passage says that Adam ***was with her***. He did not come up later. He did not get there after the fact. He ***was with her***. Based on how the scripture presents the picture of what happened, one might

question what Adam was doing while the serpent was talking to Eve.

Did Adam see the same thing that Eve ***saw***?⁵² The Bible says that Eve was fooled and Adam was not (1 Timothy 2:14). So why did Adam sin? Although many scholars have speculated as to why he sinned, the fact is that we do not really know why he sinned. But, we do know that it was his sin that got them kicked out of the garden. We also know that at the point that he sinned he was being disobedient and rebellious to God and thus he could not be serving God at that moment.

Since Adam ***was with her***, and he did not intervene, it seems that he approved of her sinning, which could mean that he too had decided to sin – or - at least he was thinking about it. This could (a) explain why Adam did not prevent Eve from sinning while he ***was with her***, and (b) be the reason why he so freely followed her into sin (with no apparent resistance).⁵³

Let us also look at the subsequent exchange between God and Adam when God came looking for Adam. See what Adam said to God:

***... the Lord God called to the man,
"Where are you?"***

⁵² The devil's appeal to Eve represented the three basic types of temptation: (1) lust of the flesh – ***the fruit of the tree was good for food***, (2) lust of the eyes - ***pleasing to the eye***, and (3) the pride of life - ***desirable for gaining wisdom***. The devil told her that ***... God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God*** (Genesis 3:4-6 NIV).

⁵³ Eve clearly offered resistance. She at least told the serpent what God's rule was (Genesis 3:2-3). But the devil was too cunning for her as she was fooled (1 Timothy 2:14).

He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

Genesis 3:9-12 NIV (underline added)

Adam seems to be pointing the finger of blame at God for giving him the woman, and at Eve for giving him the fruit (**...the woman you put here ... she gave me some fruit...**).

Adam was clearly displaying that he suffered a servant-leadership crisis, which is marked by three distinct factors:

First, Adam failed on a primary aspect of Godly service, that is, submission and service to God, and therefore he was not prepared to withstand the pressure when the devil attacked. The result: Adam was disobedient to God’s direct command.

The Bible makes it clear that God gives us grace to resist the devil and that grace comes through submission:

... He gives us more and more grace (power of the Holy Spirit, to meet this evil tendency and all others fully). That is why He says, God sets Himself against the proud and haughty, but gives grace [continually] to the lowly (those who are humble enough to receive it).

So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you.

James 4:6-7 AMP

The King James Bible says

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:7 KJV

The word **submit** in the original Greek text is **hupotassō**, which means *to arrange under, to subordinate, to subject, put in subjection, to subject one’s self, obey, to submit to one’s control*.⁵⁴ Obviously, this is not what Adam did. However, had Adam remained submitted to God then he would have had the strength to resist the devil.

We know that the devil is a relentless and tricky foe. So therefore, the devil might have been working on both Adam and Eve for a long enough period to wear them down until they each gave in. It is doubtful that either of them would have given in after just one try by the devil. They were too close to God to just turn their backs on him so easily.

Second, Adam failed in his stewardship role to take care of the woman that God had given to him. Danger was lurking and he did not protect her.

If Adam **was with her**, why didn’t he remind Eve of God’s rule and/or lead her away from the enemy? Since we know that Adam was not fooled (1 Timothy 2:14) and also know that he **was with her**, we can only conclude that he not only allowed it to happen – he watched as the

⁵⁴ Strong’s Concordance, (#G5293).

devil seduced his wife into sinning!

Is this the same man that was so excited about Eve when he cried: **bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh?** This seems to be a reversal of Adam's attitude toward Eve. He does not seem to be excited about her at that moment of sin. Instead of giving in Adam should have knocked the devil on his red behind and then taken his woman to safety.

Adam appears powerless to intervene or to protect – because at that point - he was not submitted to God. If Adam had been faithful in serving God, he would have exercised his stewardship responsibility and seen to it that they were both obedient to God's command.

Third, Adam failed in his family leadership role by not leading Eve. Instead of following God and leading Eve, Adam followed Eve and rejected God.

And later when God came looking for him, Adam failed to take responsibility for his (and his wife's) actions. Instead, (as noted above) he pointed the finger of blame at God and Eve. Adam should have stood up and said, "I disobeyed ... I sinned. I'm sorry!"⁵⁵ That would have been taking responsibility – after the fact. But that was not Adam. In his own words, **I was afraid ... so I hid.** Why was he afraid? Wasn't God good to him? He was **afraid** because he had done wrong and betrayed God.

In sum, Adam's failure to lead can be traced back to his failure to serve God (and to rely on God's strength to resist the devil). He consequently gave up stewardship and therefore when Satan launched his fatal attack, Adam could not protect Eve, nor could he lead her – in the right direction.

⁵⁵ If we do not own up to our own mistakes and shortcomings, how can we expect others around us to do so?

D. The true servant Joseph maintained his leadership

Joseph, on the other hand, maintained his service to God and thus was able to rely on Him to withstand the pressure from the devil when it came.

In the chapter *Godly Fatherhood Principle #2: Be a Man of Character*, we presented a scenario to show Joseph's character and what his probable thinking was when he made the decision not to have Mary put to death. Now, let us add another element to that scenario – the devil's relentless temptation to have Joseph get angry and to seek revenge.

Joseph's character alone would probably not have sustained him. He had to rely on God's strength. We said prior to the scenario that Joseph was a true man of character because he was led by the Lord.

It is a certainty that the devil was attacking Joseph's mind and his emotions between the time that he found out that Mary was pregnant and when the angel of God appeared to him in his dream. Because of the importance of God's plan, the devil must have been relentless in his attack on Joseph, just as he was probably relentless against Adam and Eve.

No doubt the devil tried to get Joseph to have Mary put to death because her death would have also meant Jesus' death (even as a fetus) and the defeat of God's plan. There was a lot riding on Joseph's decision at that point. God must have given enormous grace to his servant Joseph.

Two examples show us that the devil tried to ruin God's plan for salvation: first, the devil worked in Herod when Jesus was two years old to try to have Him killed (Matthew 2:16-17). Second, the devil came three times to

attack Jesus when He was preparing to launch His ministry (Luke 1:1-13).⁵⁶

Thus we can conclude that Satan would have also tried to kill Jesus (and God's plan for salvation) as early as this period of uncertainty for Joseph while he thought on what to do about Mary's alleged unfaithfulness. But Joseph did not yield. He did not buckle. Through the grace of God, because he was submitted and humble, Joseph stayed the course.

Fortunately for all of us, the same servant-leadership crisis that Adam suffered from did not plague Joseph as well. Joseph remained submitted to God and thus he maintained Godly leadership in his family and was able to accomplish God's purposes.

Adam, however, did not remain submitted to God and failed to exercise his stewardship responsibility and then he could not lead his wife. Finally, because of his sin, he and Eve were removed from the Garden of Eden.

E. Maintaining the servant-steward-leader roles in your family

One of the easiest ways to maintain the service-steward-leadership effectiveness is to see your family's home as a Godly development center for you, your wife and your children. Your wife is your partner in developing each other; and in raising and teaching your children. Your children are in training to become Godly adults. It is your responsibility to serve God and help to bring them to the level of Godly adults.

⁵⁶ To underscore the point about the devil's relentlessness: when the devil had finished tempting Jesus **he [temporarily] left Him ... until another more opportune and favorable time.** (Luke 4:13 AMP). In other words, the devil came back when he thought there was a chance for success. Thus, we know that the devil does not give up.

To accomplish this you must remain submitted to and serving God. Then you will know the right things to do and how to do them.

You must take stewardship responsibility over your family, giving your best efforts to take care of and to advance your family in Godly ways.

And you must lead your family on God's agenda in this developmental process, making sure that in spite of difficulties you stay the course to get things done.

Additionally, for husbands today, we need to keep in mind that even if your wife is not submitted to you, you still have to stand on God's Word. Satan went through Eve to get to Adam but Adam did not have to let it happen nor did he have to join her in rebellion.

Gentlemen, when the devil attacks you and your family, Joseph is the example of what to do. Adam is the example of what not to do.

If you want to stay in the Garden, or in the Promised Land, stay submitted to God, serve Him and you will do right by your family.

V. PARENTING GOD'S WAY

A. Children must obey their parents

Another part of God's order for the family involves our children. As discussed in the chapter *The Story of Joseph the Carpenter*, even though Jesus was God in the flesh, he was **obedient** to Joseph and Mary. He knew that obedience to one's parents is part of God's order for the family.

Thus, all children need to be taught this family order by their parents. God even rewards children for obeying their parents. In Ephesians 6, Paul wrote about Godly parenting and children.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— “that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

Ephesians 6:1-3 NIV

Paul was referring to the fourth commandment as given by God to Moses, **Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee** (Exodus 20:12 KJV).

Today, if we follow God's order for the family we will have stronger families and stronger individuals within the family. The examples in this book from Jewish customs, traditions and the Law show that God's people put a lot of effort into the sanctity and stability of the family. Here is another example as it relates to problem children:

A father and a mother may have a stubborn and rebellious son who refuses to obey them even after he has been punished. If a son is like that, his parents must drag him to the town gate, where the leaders of the town hold their meetings. The parents will tell the leaders, “This son of ours is stubborn and never obeys. He spends all his time drinking and partying.”

The men of the town will stone that son to death, because they must get rid of the evil he brought into the community. Everyone in Israel will be

afraid when they hear how he was punished.

Deuteronomy 21:18-21 CEV

The people in Israel did not play when it came to rearing children. They were serious about having order in the family and so was God.

Some children today do not realized how much they are getting away with because their parents have not established Godly standards in the home. If Jesus, the Son of God, could be **obedient** to Joseph and Mary while He was on earth, then so can children today be **obedient** to their parents.

However, it is up to fathers to strengthen themselves so they can strengthen their families through the exercise of Godly leadership. Each succeeding generation will be so much better off from the effort we put forth today.

B. Fathers, lead by example

When we talk about leading, it is also important to define what type of leadership is best.

Be a Godly father, lead by example, not by harsh discipline and fear. Use Godly ideas that are uplifting and inspiring. Follow God and you will also know when and how to exercise authority or to discipline a child when necessary. You will know how to draw the line in love and how to stick to it – for everyone's benefit.

God entrusted fathers to be leaders. What type of leader are you?

VI. IMPLEMENTING FATHERHOOD PRINCIPLE #4 BE A GODLY FAMILY MAN

1. Put God first. Be His Servant.

2. Seek your direction from God.
3. Lean on God in times of trouble.
4. Be a Godly steward with your family.
5. Be the leader in your family.
6. Maintain your leadership with love and humility – and with strength and conviction.
7. Invest your time in your family.

GODLY FATHERHOOD

PRINCIPLE #5

BE A TEACHER

Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger [do not exasperate them to resentment], but rear them [tenderly] in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4 AMP

According to this scripture, Fathers are responsible for preparing their children for their future and for God's calling on their lives.

Therefore, fathers must be teachers as well as educational facilitators. First, we must teach our children the Word of God. Second, we ensure that they receive proper education (both formal and informal) during their youth. Third, we are to ensure that they learn a trade, skill or profession that will enable them to support themselves and their families.

This was Joseph's responsibility to Jesus as well as to his other children.

I. TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6 KJV

A. God commanded parents to teach God's Word

At least as early as the days of Moses, God emphasized the need for parents to teach their children the Word of God to guide them in everyday life. Parents were instructed by Moses to be creative and diligent in how they taught God's Law to their children so that they would learn it - and - obey it.

Be careful to obey him, and you will become a successful and powerful nation. ... Memorize his laws and tell them to your children over and over again. Talk about them all the time, whether you're at home or walking along the road or going to bed at night, or getting up in the morning. Write down copies and tie them to your wrists and foreheads to help you obey them. Write these laws on the door frames of your homes and on your town gates.

Deuteronomy 6:3b, 6-9 CEV

In the Jewish tradition, fathers had the responsibility for making sure that their sons were taught and knew God's Law.⁵⁷ Consequently, Joseph would have done exactly as Moses prescribed.

We see another example in the scripture below that King David taught his son Solomon the Word of God. This is what Solomon wrote regarding the experience of learning from his father:

HEAR, MY sons, the instruction of a father, and pay attention in order to gain and to know intelligent discernment, comprehension, and interpretation [of spiritual matters].

For I give you good doctrine [what is to be received]; do not forsake my teaching.

When I [Solomon] was a son with my father [David], tender and the only son in the sight of my mother [Bathsheba],

He taught me and said to me, Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live.

Get skillful and godly Wisdom, get understanding (discernment, comprehension, and interpretation); do not forget and do not turn back from the words of my mouth.

Proverbs 4:1-5 AMP

This passage of scripture on fatherhood training comes from the *Book of Proverbs* by Solomon, which is also the *Mishlei*, one of the thirty-five books in the Jewish Holy Book, *Tanakh*.⁵⁸ No doubt this is one of the many

⁵⁷ Warren Doud, "The Jewish Religious System: Scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Sandhedrin," *Grace Notes Materials*, <http://www.realtime.net/~wdoud/topics/jewishsystem.html>, (accessed May 23, 2008).

⁵⁸ *The Books of Tanakh* has three subdivisions, the *Torah* (the "law" or "teachings") contains the five books of Moses, the *Nevi'im* (Prophets) contains nineteen books, and the *Ketuvim* (Writings) contains eleven books, including *Mishlei* (Proverbs). The *Books of Tanakh* (Hebrew Bible) contains the same books as the Protestant *Old Testament* with some other minor differences in the text. However, they are arranged in a different order. Also, where the *Old Testament* divides the books of Chronicles, Samuel, Kings, and Ezra-Nehemiah into two books each, the *Books of Tanakh* leaves each of these as one book. Thus, the *Tanakh* has 35 books and the *Old Testament* has 39. See a comparison list at these websites: "Compare the Protestant *Old Testament* and the Hebrew Bible," *United Methodist Women in Mission*, <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/bible/t-p.stm> (accessed May 6, 2008); Tracey Rich, "Torah," *Judaism 101*, <http://www.jewfaq.org/torah.htm> (accessed February 29, 2008).

scriptures on fatherhood that was read and practiced in ancient times by the Jews including Joseph.

This scripture gives two important concepts for fathers to teach their children: (1) **Get skillful and godly Wisdom, get understanding**, and (2) **do not forget and do not turn back from the words of my mouth**. David was preparing his son Solomon to get Godly **wisdom** and maintain strength of the family by obeying his father. We will see later that Joseph might have had a similar conversation with Jesus.

B. The study of God's Word was the highest form of worship

For ancient Jews, the study of God's Word was the highest form of worship. That might seem strange to someone who thinks of worship only in terms of praise, singing and praying at Sunday morning services.

However, the study of the Word of God is the most reliable way for God to tell us His will and His ways. When we study God's Word for the purpose of doing His will and molding our lifestyle to Him, it is an act of humbly submitting ourselves to God – which is worship. The Jews understood that submission is worship and that is why they placed so much importance on knowing God's Word.⁵⁹

Today fathers need to study God's Word as a form of worship and submission to God. The more we study the more we will know God and His will for us. Another benefit to the study of God's Word is the knowledge we get that enables us to teach our children. We cannot teach God's Word if we do not know it ourselves.

⁵⁹ John D. Garr, "Study, the Highest Form of Worship," *Restore Magazine*, http://www.restorationfoundation.org/volume_3/32_10.htm (accessed June 29, 2008).

Let us now look at the education that Jesus in his youth received that helped prepare Him for His Godly mission.

II. FORMAL AND INFORMAL TRAINING

To understand the role of Joseph as Jesus' teacher we need to look at how Jesus was educated and how Joseph participated in that process.

Even though Jesus was an extraordinary child and the **grace of God was upon Him** (Luke 2:40 NIV), He was not taught primarily through divine revelation from God the Father.

Jesus had to go through normal developmental stages as a child. This being true, it explains why He needed an earthly father to help prepare Him along the way. Given this fact, His earthly parents, especially Joseph, would have had a key role in Jesus' early development.

A. Jesus' formal education

It is likely that Jesus, as well as Joseph, was educated in the Jewish elementary school system.⁶⁰ Elementary education was a requirement as early as the first century and a majority of children attended schools maintained by the synagogues.⁶¹

Boys from five or six years old until age 12 or 13 studied in the *Bet Sefer* (House of the Book) for basic education. They also began learning the written *Torah*

⁶⁰ MacDonald, "Was Jesus Really a Rabbi?"

⁶¹ Shemuel Safrai and M. Stern, (Eds.), *The Jewish People In The First Century, Historical Geographical, Political History, Social, Cultural, Religious Life and Institutions, Volume Two*, (England: Van Goreum Fortress Press, 1975), Pgs. 947-948.

and the oral *Torah*.⁶² Part of their training was to memorize large portions of scripture and know the history of the Jews from the very beginning.

After completion of elementary education most students went to work to learn a trade or profession. Some outstanding students would enter the *Bet Midrash* (House of Study) where their education could continue into adulthood and even for decades through various stages.

By age thirty they would have completed the educational requirements to be a Rabbi,⁶³ the same age that Jesus launched his independent ministry.

Two examples indicate that Jesus attended the *Bet Midrash*:

First, He was definitely qualified for advanced study. Jesus clearly demonstrated that He was an exceptional student when He was in the temple with the **teachers** of the Law at age 12 who were **amazed at his understanding and his answers** (Luke 2:47 NIV).

Second, a phrase that Jesus used in an illustration

⁶² The “written *Torah*” refers to the first five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) which is one of the three books of the *Tanakh*. The “oral *Torah*” refers to the oral instructions believed to have been given by God to Moses and subsequently passed down to each generation orally. Later, beginning around 200 CE the oral *Torah* was written down. This work is called the “written oral *Torah*,” or the *Talmud* (which consist of the *Mishnah* and its commentaries, the *Gemarah*). John J. Parsons, “Oral Torah – Torah sheb’al peh,” *Hebrew for Christians*, http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Scripture/Torah/Oral_Torah/oral_torah.html (accessed April 8, 2009).

⁶³ Dr. Ron Moseley, “Jewish Education in Ancient Times,” *Restore Magazine*, Vol. III, Issue 2, http://www.restorationfoundation.org/volume_3/32_6.htm (accessed April 23, 2008); MacDonald, “Was Jesus Really a Rabbi?;” “Rabbi and Talmidim,” *Follow the Rabbi* <http://www.followtherabbi.com/Brix?pageID=2753> (accessed June 9, 2008).

(two decades later) indicates that He was familiar with the methods of instruction used in the *Bet Midrash*. In Mathew 10:27 NIV Jesus said, **“What is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.”** This phrase was easily recognizable by people who were familiar with the *Bet Midrash* form of teaching. That is, the teacher would speak or whisper into the ear of the *meturganim* (interpreter) who would shout it to the class. This method of teaching through the *meturganim* dated back to the time of Ezra.⁶⁴

Thus, we see that as a youth, Jesus was educated in both the *Bet Sefer* and the *Bet Midrash*. Later we look at evidence of His education to be a Rabbi.

B. Joseph was Jesus’ teacher

Joseph understood from the Word of God and from the prevailing practices at the time, that it was God’s command for the father to teach his son. He would have expected to teach Jesus and would have done so to the best of his ability.

Exactly how much Joseph assisted in Jesus’ personal and spiritual development is not definitively stated in scripture. However, the fact that he facilitated for Jesus’ education and upbringing is without question.

Let us look at the Biblical account of the 12-year-old Jesus after He left the **teachers** in Jerusalem and returned to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary:

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them ... And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

Luke 2:51, 52 NIV

⁶⁴ Moseley, “Jewish Education in Ancient Times.”

Note that Jesus was **obedient to them** and He **grew in wisdom and stature** (v. 51-52). This scripture indicates: (1) that Jesus, in his human capacity, did not have all **wisdom** at the time He was in Jerusalem; (2) that it was a process for Jesus to gain **wisdom**;⁶⁵ and (3) that Jesus was under His parents' authority as He **grew in wisdom and stature**. Therefore, we conclude that Joseph was teaching Jesus during the period that Jesus was **obedient to them**.

C. Joseph was a private tutor for Jesus

In addition to having attended elementary education, Joseph could have also been highly educated. He might have been a Hasid as well.⁶⁶ The Hasidim was a sub-sect of the Pharisees, but differed greatly from the image portrayed of the Pharisees in the Bible. They were primarily located in the region of Galilee and were distinguished by their "love for the people." They had true faith in God and addressed Him as "abba" and "my father." They were accustomed to praying for healing for the sick and driving out evil spirits.⁶⁷

If indeed Joseph was highly educated, then our understanding about the relationship between Joseph and Jesus is significantly broadened. Joseph would have been more than prepared to teach the boy Jesus. He would have functioned as a private mentor and tutor to

⁶⁵ Proverbs 8:17 tells us that in order to find **wisdom** we must seek it. Thus, Jesus (the man child) had to study the Word of God and ask God for **wisdom** for Him to grow in **wisdom**.

⁶⁶ Jack Kilmon, "Jesus Education," *The Scriptorium*, <http://www.historian.net/jesused.html> (accessed May 2, 2008).

⁶⁷ "The Pharisees, Hasidim, and the Early Jewish Church," *Hope of Israel Ministries (Ecclesia of YEHOVAH)*, <http://www.hope-of-israel.org/hasidim.htm> (accessed June 23, 2008).

the boy Jesus in areas of spiritual and religious training.

This tutoring by Joseph along with Jesus' formal education in the Jewish educational system could explain some of why Jesus was so prepared to speak with the **teachers** of the Law when he was only 12 years old.

That scene in the court of the temple in Jerusalem demonstrates that the boy Jesus had studied the Law extensively - because He was very knowledgeable in the scriptures and in the methods of studying the scriptures.

Was Jesus asking questions of the **teachers** because He was looking for answers for His own knowledge? Was He challenging the teachers as He often did to the Jewish leaders later in His life?

Actually, it is more likely that He was engaged in "oral discussion," "debating legal questions" and "arguing the scriptures" as was typically characteristic of teachers and students of the Law at the time. Posing questions was a favorite means of getting to the truth. It was the way they learned, internalized and agreed on the interpretations of the scriptures and the oral *Torah*.⁶⁸

This explains more fully what transpired in the temple between Jesus and the **teachers** of the Law.

⁶⁸ The oral *Torah* was debated for centuries before it was written into the "written oral *Torah*" between 200 and 500 CE. See also: Doud, "The Jewish Religious System." and Howard Morgan, "Beit Midrash: Learning How to Live Together," *Restore Magazine*, http://www.restorationfoundation.org/volume_3/32_22/htm (accessed June 29, 2008). A good example of arguing the scriptures can be seen in the 1983 Barbra Streisand movie, *Yentl*.

... they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.

Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 2:46-47 NIV (underline added)

This scene in the temple courts was not the boy Jesus (*as God*) profoundly educating and answering questions of the **teachers** of the law. It was the student Jesus (*as man child*) articulating His own **answers** and **asking them questions** as He engaged in this process of discussing and debating the scriptures and the oral *Torah*.

This type of discussion of differing points of views on a deep and meaningful level often brought out the passion in students for the Word of God. It also meant that they were truly interested in getting to the true meaning. When they approached this vigorous study with a genuine attitude of humility it was easy to see that no one knew it all and that everyone could come to a better knowledge of the Lord by sharing what God had revealed to each of them.⁶⁹

Since this was a common form of studying the Word of God, then it is likely that the same kind of discussion and debate could be seen in many quarters of Jewish life. The same type of discussion that happened in the temple with Jesus and the **teachers** of the Law would have occurred in Joseph's home. He and Jesus, as well as Jesus' brothers would have discussed and debated the oral *Torah* and the scriptures enthusiastically.

Imagine for a moment that you are looking in on

⁶⁹ Morgan, "Beit Midrash: Learning How to Live Together."

Joseph's carpentry shop to see Joseph as he poses questions to his young sons. They take sides and debate the merits of each other's arguments and the interpretations of the scriptures while they measure, cut and sand wood in the shop.

Since debating the scriptures was the accepted method of learning and internalizing the scriptures, it is reasonable that Joseph used it to teach his sons. After all, as stated earlier, it was a father's responsibility to teach the *Torah* to his sons.⁷⁰

Today, we should not see this process of debating the scriptures as an antagonistic exchange. We should imitate it by engaging in vigorous Bible study and purposeful debate of the scriptures. We will have a more complete understanding of the meanings in God's Word as a result.

Additionally, we should seek to have a more comprehensive understanding of the context in which the scriptures were written. As Bible students who dig deep into God's Word, we fathers will be more prepared to teach our children about who Jesus really was and why His sacrifice was so important.

D. Joseph was a personal coach for Jesus

As we have seen in this chapter, Jesus went through a process of learning as any child would. Joseph assisted Him, as any father should. He would have provided personal coaching to Jesus (during His youth) to help Him get close to His own Father. This was something similar to how Eli helped Samuel to understand when the Lord was calling him.

⁷⁰ Pastor Michael Jackson, "Sermon Transcripts: Jesus, Son of Joseph," *New Life Assembly of God*, <http://www.nlag.net/Sermons/Transcripts/mjjesusjoeson.htm> (accessed May 2, 2008).

The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"

Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

1 Samuel 3:8-10 NIV

Joseph, in his role as coach, would have studied his Son Jesus to see how He was developing. Perhaps this is why Joseph did not say anything to the 12-year-old Jesus when they found Him in the temple in Jerusalem.

When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Luke 2:48-51 NIV

Perhaps Joseph was internalizing how Jesus was developing at that point. He would have contemplated how he could further assist Jesus as Jesus continued to learn and develop. Joseph's conversation with Jesus would have happened later after he had an opportunity

to digest what was going on and devise a course of action to help Jesus.

E. Jesus studied to be a Rabbi

It is important to note that prior to Jesus embarking on His divinely appointed ministry, He was a recognized and respected teacher in the synagogues in the region near Nazareth.

Jesus was a Rabbi. The role of a Rabbi was to be a teacher (or master) of the scriptures (including the oral *Torah*) and the accepted interpretations of the scriptures. The fact that Jesus was a recognized Rabbi means He was trained for and ordained to that office or position. He was probably a Rabbi of the "most advanced level" meaning He could teach with "authority" and offer new interpretations of the scripture.⁷¹

Several scriptures document that Jesus taught in the synagogues and temples *prior to* launching His own ministry.⁷²

Jesus obviously had studied, discussed and debated the Word of God for a long time prior to His ministry. Joseph, as Jesus' tutor and coach, would have been instrumental in helping to lay the early foundation for Jesus' later development.

Fathers today can imitate Joseph's approach to facilitating for their children's education. Begin with

⁷¹ Jesus was recognized as a Rabbi by Jewish leaders who were also knowledgeable in the scriptures such as: (1) Nicodemus, a Pharisee and Jewish ruler (John 3:1-2), (2) a lawyer (Matthew 22:35-36), (3) a rich man (Matthew 19:16), (4) the Pharisees (Luke 19:39), and (5) the Sadducees (Luke 20:27-28). Also see: "Rabbi and Talmidim," *Follow the Rabbi*; McDonald, "Was Jesus Really a Rabbi?"

⁷² Some of the scriptures which show that Jesus taught in the synagogues and temples: Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:15, 31-33, 44; 6:6; John 6:59; 7:14; 8:1; 18:18.

Sunday School and church, and training, tutoring and coaching at home. Help them with their homework and get to know their strengths and weaknesses. Challenge them to do their best. Encourage them to reach for the highest level possible.

III. LEARNING A TRADE, SKILL OR PROFESSION

A. Joseph trained Jesus to be a carpenter

As noted earlier, one of the many prevailing practices of the time was for fathers to teach their sons the *Torah*. They were also charged with teaching them a trade.⁷³ There is an ancient Hebrew saying, “*He who does not teach his son a useful trade is bringing him up to be a thief.*”⁷⁴ According to this social norm, Joseph taught his carpentry trade to all of his sons.

We know that this happened because scripture confirms it. Jesus was referred to as a **carpenter** in Mark 6:3 and as the **carpenter's son** in Matthew 13:55.

Today, many fathers still bring their children into their businesses. Many children also choose the same profession as one of their parents. However, the key point that Joseph showed us by training Jesus to be a carpenter is that we as parents must provide opportunity and direction for our children to learn the skills, trades and professions that will enable them as adults to support themselves and their families. This is an important part of the overall training that fathers must make sure they provide for each of their children.

B. Joseph helped prepare Jesus for Ministry

God entrusted Jesus' earthly upbringing to Joseph and Mary, parents that were in harmony with God and

⁷³ Moseley, “Jewish Education in Ancient Times.”

⁷⁴ Jackson, “Sermon Transcripts: Jesus, Son of Joseph.”

God's plan. They built a family that helped prepare Jesus for His Godly mission.

As such, Joseph was personally prepared to teach the human side of Jesus and to provide direction to Him. Thus, it was appropriate that Joseph was a man of God, educated in the scriptures and very attuned to God's will.

Nonetheless, only God the Father could tell Jesus what His ministry would be. Only God the Father could *prepare* Jesus for what was before him. Only God the Father could show Jesus how to implement that portion of God's plan for salvation.

The Godly father Joseph was simply a servant of God who provided for Jesus what God the Father determined that Jesus needed during His formative stages. In fact, even Jesus in a prayer to God the Father acknowledged God as His source when He said, “***everything you have given me comes from you***” (John 17:7 NIV).

Every father today has the same role and responsibility that Joseph had – to hear from God and to provide for his children what God has determined that they need. He has to help train his children to do what God called them for.

Imagine for a moment how Godly training and fatherhood involvement could impact boys and girls who have not had proactive fathers. How it would strengthen the family and our communities. How our youth would raise the level of their expectations for their own accomplishments and their own futures.

Children who grow up with Godly fatherhood involvement have more self-confidence and strive for greater achievements. They generally do not settle for less than they are capable of when they are reinforced in the home by their father.

Begin by teaching your children when they are

young, not once they get older and are already set in their ways. Make the Word of God the basic standard for living in your house. The Jewish people understood the importance of fatherhood involvement with their children, especially their sons. That is why they made it a duty for fathers to teach their sons.

If you as a father really want to be an effective father who teaches his children, you need to study them. You need to really know them to see what they need and when they need it. You need to understand how each of your children takes in and processes information. Then you will be better able to present knowledge and wisdom to them as David did for Solomon and as Joseph did for Jesus.

IV. IMPLEMENTING FATHERHOOD PRINCIPLE #5 BE A TEACHER

1. Teach your children the Word of God. Have regularly scheduled Bible Study and prayer with your children.
2. Train your children to seek God's will for their lives.
3. Use scripture to answer your children's questions.
4. Be the best example of Godly behavior and Godly lifestyle.
5. Ensure that our children get the best formal education available to you - during their youth and beyond.
6. Ask God to direct you in what and how to teach your children.
7. Provide direction and opportunity for your children's career choices so that they will have a marketable skill, trade or profession.

GODLY FATHERHOOD

PRINCIPLE #6

BE A PROVIDER

Husbands, as head of the family, are most often the sole provider or at least the main provider for a family. As such, each husband needs to be financially prepared to provide for his family.

In this chapter we will look at: (1) God's Word on finances as it relates to providing for a family, (2) how Joseph demonstrated his financial preparedness to support his family – prior to getting married, and (3) how Joseph provided for his family's needs.

I. GOD'S WORD ON FINANCES

There are hundreds of scriptures in the Bible on finances. Herein are a few which cover the basic principles that fathers can immediately apply to themselves and their families.

A. God provides for all of our needs

As discussed in the chapter *Godly Fatherhood Principle #4: Be a Family Man*, everything we have comes from God. He owns everything. We are just stewards over what God gives us.

The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

Psalm 24:1 KJV

From the earliest time that God is the ultimate provider for His people. Here are three examples:

First, God has put everything we need in place for us. We see this from the example of Adam and Eve. God gave them the whole earth to **subdue** and to have **dominion** over (Genesis 1:26, 28). He provided all that they needed including food:

“I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food...”

Genesis 1:29 NIV

Second, we see from the example of the Hebrews in the dessert that God provides His people with sustenance each and every day.

The Lord said to Moses, “Look, I’m going to rain down food from heaven for you. Each day the people can go out and pick up as much food as they need for that day.

Genesis 16:4 NLT

Third, God provides for us when the normal supply runs out. We see this from the example of the prophet Elijah and the Widow in Sidon.

Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the Lord came to him: “Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food.”

... “As surely as the Lord your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug ...

Elijah said to her, “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said ... For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord gives rain on the land.’”

1 Kings 17:7-14 NIV

God supplied for both the Widow and Elijah as the provision for each of them had run out. God will do the same for you because He is the great provider.

B. When God calls us to serve Him, He equips us to succeed

God also gives us the abilities, talents and spiritual gifts (Deuteronomy 8:18; John 3:27, Romans 12:6-8) that enable us to succeed. How He equips us is tied to what He called each of us to do.

We can see a clear example of this in how God equipped His servant Moses. He provided Moses with miraculous signs and the ability to speak, enabling him to face Pharaoh (Exodus 4:1-11). He also gave Moses his brother Aaron to help him.

Later, when Moses seemed to have his back up against the wall while Egypt’s army closed in on the Israelites, Moses cried out to God and then God told him how to part the Red Sea and lead his people to the other side (Exodus 14:15-16). And, in the desert, when the people complained, God gave Moses a stick to turn bitter water into drinkable water (Exodus 15:24). When God needed help organizing the people, God sent Moses’ father-in-law Jethro to give him advise on organizational structure (Genesis 18:13-26). God consistently equipped Moses with what was necessary to get the job done.

In the example of Adam and Eve, we know that God

mandated them to **be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion** (Genesis 1:27-28 KJV). Thus God certainly gave them the ability to do so.

Since God called Joseph to lead his family and to provide for them, then we know that God also equipped him to do so.

The same is true with you. Whatever career God called you to, He gave you the ability to succeed in it. Whatever ministry and/or mission He charged you with, He gave you the ability to accomplish His purpose in that area. Whatever family He gave you, He gave you the ability to provide for, and to lead that family.

C. We must be good stewards of what God gives us⁷⁵

Joseph, an observant Jew, would have been in harmony with Jewish laws on finances, including tithing, which states that a tenth of our increase must be returned to God:

Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year

Deuteronomy 14:22 KJV

The original Hebrew text for the word **tithe** is **asar**⁷⁶

⁷⁵ As I write this, I am reminded of my Pastor's stewardship initiatives:

- (1) The first thing we do with our income or increase is tithe and give the Lord an offering
- (2) The second thing we do is pay our bills on time.
- (3) The third thing we do is save systematically and invest.
- (4) The fourth thing we do is spend wisely and responsibly. We live within our means.

Stewardship Tips from Bishop Roderick R. Caesar, Jr., Bethel Gospel Tabernacle, Jamaica, Queens, New York.

which means: *take the tenth part of*. Thus the **tithe** is ten percent (10%) of the increase.

This is an extremely important financial law. Keep in mind that everything comes from God and we are stewards of what He gives us. *Returning* a tenth is all that is required so that God's work on earth can be supported. If we do not return the tenth then we are thieves. When we do return the tenth, God blesses us even more.

Return to me, and I will return to you," says the Lord Almighty.

"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

"But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'

"In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

Malachi 3:7-10 NIV

Many people wonder about the **tithe**, are you to **tithe** on the net or the gross. The simple answer is, "Do you want God to bless the net or the gross?" The original scripture on tithing specified to **tithe** on the **increase** which is the gross.

Another area where we need to give back to God from what He gives us is with our talents and abilities. When

⁷⁶ *Strong's Concordance*, (#H6237).

we use our talents and abilities to prosper, it is because God allowed or caused it to happen – for His purposes:

But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 8:18 KJV

Additionally, the gifts that we have, particularly our Spiritual gifts are to be used for His purposes.

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good

...

All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

I Corinthians 12:4-7, 11 NIV

Thus we see from God's Word on finances that: (1) He will **supply all your need** (Philippians 4:19 KJV); (2) He equips us to succeed at what He calls us to do; and (3) we must be good stewards of what He gives to us and return to God what He requires of us.

When we as fathers follow God's financial laws we are blessed and able to provide for our families. As we shall see in this chapter, Joseph understood God's laws on finances. He obeyed God and God took care of his family's needs.

II. JOSEPH DEMONSTRATED HIS FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS TO SUPPORT A FAMILY

According to God's pattern, a man must be prepared to provide for a family before he marries. We can see this from the very beginning. With Adam, God put him in the garden and gave him a job. Then God gave Adam a wife - but only after he had proven himself successful at his God-given responsibility (Genesis 2:15-23).

Solomon also explained God's pattern in Proverbs:

[Put first things first.] Prepare your work outside and get it ready for yourself in the field; and afterward build your house and establish a home.

Proverbs 24:27 AMP

When we follow this Godly wisdom today, we create a better chance of success for our marriages as a whole because we do not put an extra financial burden on the husband and wife. Poor financial health in a family can lead to unmet expectation, arguments and strife, worry and much more. Men, avoid this and prepare yourself before you take on a wife and family.

If you are already married and you are not financially prepared, create a plan with your spouse to accomplish it. Follow God's plan for your career.

A. Joseph was prepared financially for a family

Joseph's financial preparedness to take on a wife and family is indicated by the probable financial arrangements prior to the *kiddushin*⁷⁷ (engagement).

According to Jewish custom, Joseph would have

⁷⁷ As discussed throughout this book *Kiddushin* began the engagement stage of the marriage which was concluded with the *Nissuin* (marriage) ceremony up to 1 to 2 years later.

agreed to pay a *mohar* (dowry)⁷⁸ to Mary's father and he would have also given Mary a *mattan* (voluntary gift, cash or service).⁷⁹

In early Jewish tradition, the *mohar* and the *mattan* had substantial value. The *mohar* itself could have been the value of the bride's lost labor to her family. We see in Genesis that Jacob's *mohar* to Laban was seven years of labor for each of his two wives (Leah and Rachel) (Genesis 29). An example of a *mattan* was Eliezer (on Isaac's behalf) giving **clothing, as well as silver and gold jewelry, to Rebekah. He also gave expensive gifts to her brother and her mother** (Genesis 24:53).

However, in Joseph's time the *mohar* and *mattan* were primarily symbolic gifts. They may not have held the same financial significance as those recorded in Genesis. Nonetheless, based on the requirements of the time, Joseph would have (by necessity) met his financial responsibilities associated with the *mohar* and *mattan* before he got married. Thus, he demonstrated to Mary's family that he was financially prepared to take care of her and a family.

In some cultures today the dowry or *mohar* is still an important part of the engagement process. However, in most modern societies this has been eliminated. Nonetheless, men today can (and should) show their readiness to handle the financial obligations of a family

⁷⁸ The bridegroom's father negotiated the amount of the *mohar* (dowry) with the bride's father.

⁷⁹ Traditionally, a bride's father would have given the bride part of the *mohar* (dowry) to help establish her in her new life. This was called the *shiluhim* and was considered part of her inheritance. Risk, "The Ultimate Wedding;" Hayyim Schauss, "The Evolution of Marriage: Ancient," *MyJewishLearning.com: The Personal Gateway to Jewish Exploration*, <http://www.myjewishlearning.com/lifecycle/Marriage/AboutMarriage/EvolutionAncient.htm> (accessed May 23, 2008).

by revealing their financial health. That is, in addition to having a viable job, men (and women) need to: (1) have very little debt, (2) have a saving account with at least a few months salary saved, (3) have a retirement account, and (4) they should not expect to finance their life style through credit cards and unnecessary debt.

Generally speaking, the fathers of the bride and the bridegroom should take a role in insuring that the new couple is not saddled with potential financial problems by at least having a frank conversation with them. However, if fathers are training their children in Godly finances, these problems will be essentially avoided.

B. Joseph provided housing for his family

Prevailing practices during Joseph time required a man to build a separate house or at least a room onto his father's house prior to the *nissuin* (the completion of the marriage process). This was called a *huppah* (bridal chamber) which also had to be furnished and decorated before the bridegroom could bring his bride home.

The building of the *huppah* took place during the *kiddushin* (betrothal/engagement) period. Once the *huppah* was completed, the bridegroom's father had to approve it before it was deemed ready for the bridegroom to bring the bride. Only then could the *nissuin* take place, followed by the bride and bridegroom secluding themselves in the *huppah* for seven days.⁸⁰

Previously, we discussed how Joseph was obedient when God commanded him to marry Mary. After the angel appeared to him in his dream, Joseph immediately went to get Mary. The King James Version of the Bible says:

⁸⁰ Risk, "The Ultimate Wedding;" Schauss, "The Evolution of Marriage: Ancient."

Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife.

Matthew 1:24 KJV

As discussed in the chapter, *The Story of Joseph the Carpenter*, it was not uncommon for the bridegroom to go in the middle of the night to get his bride.⁸¹ However, also according to Jewish customs, Joseph could not go to get Mary unless he had previously prepared (and gotten approval of) the *huppah*.

Under normal circumstances, either Joseph's father or Mary's father could have stopped the *nissuin* (wedding) from proceeding without the necessary customs being followed such as the building of the *huppah*.

Joseph most likely had completed the *huppah* because (as a skilled carpenter) he had plenty of time to build it. The timeline shows that Joseph did not take Mary to be his wife for at least three months after the *kiddushin* (betrothal/engagement) began. We know this because right after Mary conceived through **the power of the Most High** she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth for three months.⁸² The scripture says:

... Then the angel left her. At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth ... Mary stayed with Elizabeth

⁸¹ Risk, "The Ultimate Wedding."

⁸² The period of time for Joseph to build the *huppah* was a minimum of three months. That is how long Mary was with Elizabeth **in the hill country of Judea** which was south of Jerusalem. There was probably another 10-15 days for round-trip travel. So Mary would easily have been three to four months pregnant, giving Joseph at least that amount of time to build the *huppah*. See Blessitt, "Miles Jesus and Mary Walked."

for about three months and then returned home.

Luke 1:38-40, 55 NIV

Furthermore, as a Godly man, Joseph would have been a responsible man as well. We know from scripture that he had prepared his own residence or at least a room on his father's house because the New International Version Bible alludes to Joseph's **home** twice in Matthew 1 when the angel of God told him:

"do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife"

... When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

Matthew 1: 20, 24 NIV

In all likelihood our God, who **is not a God of confusion and disorder but of peace and order** (1 Corinthians 14:33 AMP), had appropriately timed the angel's visit to Joseph. He would have sent the angel after the *huppah* had already been prepared and perhaps even approved by Joseph's father. That way Joseph could do as God commanded through the angel and immediately take **Mary home as his wife**.

Men today need to demonstrate that they are prepared to take on a wife and family the same as Joseph did. Joseph demonstrated by the building of the *huppah* that he was prepared to complete the marriage process. Men today can demonstrate their financial preparedness before marriage by having several months rent in the bank if you plan to continue renting. If you plan to purchase a condo, co-op apartment or house, you should have all or part of a down payment.

III. JOSEPH PROVIDED FOR HIS FAMILY'S NEEDS

A. Joseph had a marketable trade

The fact that Joseph had a viable trade as a carpenter further demonstrates that he was financially prepared for a family.

Carpentry was a well-respected and flourishing trade in the first century. Carpenters generally were highly skilled craftsmen by necessity as trees were very scarce in Israel. Thus, wood was very expensive and could not be wasted.⁸³

Carpenters had a wide variety of responsibilities within their communities. Not only were they builders of buildings and boats, they were also the suppliers of oil for cooking and heating, softwood for baskets and they were makers of farm tools and yokes. Many were architects as well as masons, furniture makers and repairers of houses, roofs, locks and doors.⁸⁴

During Joseph's time there were many large building projects initiated by Herod the Great. After his death, his son Herod Antipas had major projects in the capital city of Sepphoris in Galilee, about five miles from Nazareth.⁸⁵ Given that Joseph's trade was in high demand, he was unlikely to be unemployed or unable to support his family.

B. Joseph was the provider for a family of ten

Joseph and Mary were the parents of at least seven

⁸³ Exum, "Jesus Christ, the Carpenter."

⁸⁴ Kilmon, "Jesus Education;" Jackson, "Sermon Transcripts: Jesus, Son of Joseph;" Rusty Russell, "Cities of Ancient Israel: Nazareth," www.bible-history.com/geography/ancient-israel/nazareth.html, *Bible History Online* (accessed May 27, 2008).

⁸⁵ Russell, "Cities of Ancient Israel: Nazareth".

children in addition to Jesus. Therefore, God must have given Joseph the ability to provide for a family of ten.

Biblical prophecy says that Jesus was to be born to a poor family (Isaiah 11:1b, 53:2a). The fulfillment of this prophecy was confirmed by the offering made in the synagogue in Jerusalem for Mary's cleansing after Jesus was born. A **pair of doves or two young pigeons** (Luke 2:24 NIV) was offered instead of a **lamb** (Leviticus 12:6-8).⁸⁶

However, despite being a poor family, Joseph must have prospered to some degree to be able to feed, clothe, shelter and educate at least eight children. Below are two examples:

First, when Joseph took his family to Egypt, he had to provide for them while they traveled to Egypt, stayed there for what could have been two years,⁸⁷ and then returned and re-settled in Nazareth.

Would God have sent Joseph to Egypt not knowing if Joseph could afford food and shelter for his family? I do not think so. God provided for Joseph, as He will do for each of us. We need only be obedient and humble servants as was Joseph.

⁸⁶ The Mosaic Law, as written in Leviticus states: ***If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering.*** (Leviticus 12:8 NIV).

⁸⁷ Two years is an estimate based on a synthesis of scholarly debate on the dates of Jesus' Birth and Herod's death. Nevertheless, however much time was spent in Egypt, the travel to and from Egypt alone would have taken weeks as the trip was 350-400 miles each way - on foot. Obviously, Joseph needed money to pay for food and lodging while they traveled. See Phil Greetham, "The Date of Jesus Birth," *The Nativity Pages*, http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/p_greetham/Wisemen/chron2.html (Accessed January 22, 2009); and Daniel R. Schwartz, *Studies in the Jewish Background of Christianity*, (Germany: J.C.B. Mohr, 1992), p. 157.

Did Joseph work at his trade while they were in Egypt? Was he able to find work immediately upon his return? We do not know this.

However, we do know that they were given gifts of **gold, and frankincense and myrrh** (Matthew 2:11 KJV) by the Magi right before God told Joseph to take his family to Egypt. These gifts could have been of substantial value and thus used to finance the entire trip or at least part of it. Therefore, we conclude that for the trip to Egypt, Joseph either had a cash reserve, a good support network and/or God supplied for him in an extraordinary fashion.

Second, after Joseph died, how was Mary supported? Did her sons provide for her or did Joseph leave something to take care of her?

We are told in Proverbs 13:22 that **a good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children** (KJV). Joseph most likely sought to fulfill this and would have, to the best of his ability, also taken care of Mary and any young children that might have still been in the household.

The Bible does not indicate that there was a lack of provision in Joseph's family. Therefore, it is apparent that Joseph handled his fatherhood stewardship responsibility of providing for his family through his trade and especially through the grace of God.

Fathers need to know and obey God's financial laws. Be a good steward, tithe and use your gifts for God's purposes. Adherence to these laws is crucial to receiving what God has for you and your family. Follow these laws and you will be blessed.

Like Joseph, fathers should be equipped with a marketable trade, skill or profession that enables them to provide for their families.

IV. IMPLEMENTING FATHERHOOD PRINCIPLE #6: BE A PROVIDER

1. Before marriage, obtain a marketable skill, trade and/or profession that can support an entire family.
2. Practice good stewardship principles as outlined in this chapter, including tithing.
3. Pray over your finances regularly.
4. Keep excellent records of your finances. Maintain a written budget.
5. Maintain a savings of at least three months income.
6. Invest in a suitable retirement plan.
7. Keep only a minimum amount of debt. Do not use unnecessary or unwise debt to finance a lifestyle.

GODLY FATHERHOOD

PRINCIPLE #7

BE A PROTECTOR

A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it.

Proverbs 22:3 NIV

When your heart is receptive to hear from God it is much easier for you to know when danger is approaching because you are in good communication with the Holy Spirit who ***will guide you into all truth*** (John 16:13 KJV). This certainly was Joseph's experience. He stayed in close communication with God and when there was danger God told Joseph what to do.

Throughout this book we have seen how God consistently directed Joseph, enabling him to protect and care for his family. In each of those situations, Joseph was either following a specific instruction from the Lord or he was just acting in a Godly fashion because he was truly a Godly man.

Herein we present several examples of how Joseph and other men of God protected their families. In addition, we also present some examples of the consequences of when a husband or father does not protect his family.

In this chapter we examine five means for fathers to protect their families by: (1) providing spiritual covering, (2) making wise decisions on behalf of their family, (3) providing a safe, stable and nurturing environment, (4) providing physical protection, and (5) giving tough

love when needed.

I. PROVIDE SPIRITUAL COVERING

A. Have faith in God

Because Joseph had **faith** in God he protected Mary by following God's command and taking her to be his wife. He gave spiritual as well as legal⁸⁸ and financial covering for her and the yet to be born baby Jesus.

Jesus was born into a Godly family as a result of Joseph giving Mary covering. That is what we need today. Many new parents have forsaken marriage and family. Almost four out of ten births occur to single mothers.⁸⁹

The importance of fathers in the family continues to decline in the minds of many of these childbearing parents. But, keep in mind that *un-wed mother* also means an *un-wed father*. Fathers need to take responsibility. Joseph, however, did not let Mary go it alone. He followed God and became the Godly father that God intended him to be.

An example of a husband not having **faith** is Adam. It seems that Adam lost **faith** in God on the issue of not eating **from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**. Consequently, Adam sinned and the door was then opened for his son Cain (and all of us) to sin. Later, Cain killed Abel.

In this instance, had the father kept his **faith** and

⁸⁸ The legal covering was their marriage. Thus Jesus was not born to a single mother.

⁸⁹ The most recent government data shows that 38.5% of births in the U.S. were to single-mothers in 2006. That is 1,641,946 births out of a total of 4,265,555. See the report by Joyce A. Martin, et al., "Births: Final Data for 2006," *National Vital Statistics Reports*, Volume 57, Number 7, National Center for Health Statistics, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services, January 7, 2009.

not sinned then the door would not have been opened (by the father) for the son to sin. The bottom line is that we protect our families by maintaining our **faith** in God and God's Word. Ultimately when we lose our **faith** and accept sin our families are impacted negatively.

In Deuteronomy God told us about one generation affecting the next:

... I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Deuteronomy 5:9-10 NIV

Keep your **faith** up by staying in the Word of God, for as we know **faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God** (Romans 10:17 KJV).

B. If you lack faith, ask God

Certainly, Joseph had **faith**. He believed in God. He trusted in God. He relied on God. And, he obeyed God. God was pleased with Joseph because Joseph had **faith**. We are told in Hebrews that:

... without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

Hebrews 11:6 NIV

As fathers who have to protect our families, we will be successful if we have **faith** like Joseph – OR – if we are like the man who brought his son to Jesus. He lacked **faith** – but asked God for what he was missing:

A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit ... I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

"O unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, ... When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion ...

Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"

"From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."

"If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for him who believes."

Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"

Mark 9:17-24 NIV

The father brought the boy to Jesus – but because of his lack of **faith** in God, Jesus confronted him on this issue. Let us look at a portion of this same passage in the King James Bible:

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.

And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.

Mark 9:23-24 KJV (underline added)

If we were a first-hand observer of this Biblical scene this is what we might have seen. The boy's father and

Jesus were standing right next to each other. The two of them were slightly bent over watching the boy roll around on the ground as the father says ... **but if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.**

Jesus then gazes into the father's eyes with a penetrating laser-like calm intensity and says, **"If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.**

The father was stunned. In a flash of a mini-second he realized that he had met God face-to-face and **straightway** he **cried out, said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.**

Notice that the father **said with "tears"**. Well, what were those **tears**? Those were the **tears** of joy that we get when we meet God. They were the same **tears** we get when we are in our prayer closet, the Holy Spirit meets us and we are overwhelmed with His presence. They were the same **tears** that we get at the point of salvation when we accepted Jesus as Lord and Master and the Holy Spirit came into our hearts.

The experience of being met by God is why the boy's father was crying. He was repenting and accepting Jesus at that very moment. And because he took his eye (mind's eye) off his son's problem and transfixed himself on Jesus, he knew deliverance was at hand. He had no more doubt, no reason to fear. He confessed his belief, **"I do believe."** Jesus then healed his son.

All it took was for the father to focus on Jesus and his **faith** was transformed (Hebrews 12:2).

So if you lack **faith**, be like the boy's father and go to Jesus. He will give you **faith**. And the easiest way to find Jesus is through His Word.

This father was willing to do what it took for his son. He had to deal with his own problem first. He was

delivered from his lack of **faith**. And – because he put himself on the line, he saved his son from a life of control by Satan. If he had not stepped forward, both he and his son could have remained defeated.

If your son or daughter has a problem, take him or her to Jesus. If you lack **faith**, take it to Jesus. Remember, he **rewards those who earnestly seek him** (Hebrews 11:6 NIV).

If you are seeking a relationship with Jesus - see near the end of this book (before Appendix I).

C. Pray for your family

Previously, in the chapter *Godly Fatherhood Principle #1: Be a Godly Man* we established that Joseph was a praying man. He provided spiritual covering for his family with his regular prayers.

Joseph also prayed in times of trouble while facing all the challenges documented in this book. For example, when the 12-year-old Jesus was missing on the return trip from Jerusalem, we can reasonably assume that Joseph led Mary (and possibly others) as they prayed for the safety of their Son.

Furthermore, we should expect that they prayed with **faith** and confidence that Jesus was unharmed and would be returned to them safely. Both Joseph and Mary had been given a vision from God (through the angels) of whom Jesus was and what He was going to do. So we can expect that they held onto that vision as they prayed.

Do likewise. Take your eyes off the problem and fix them on God and His Word when you pray. Maintain your **faith**, pray with great expectations of hearing from God.

Another example is the story of Abraham saving Lot from God's destruction of the twin cities of Sodom and

Gomorra. Abraham was not Lot's father; he was his uncle. However, Abraham had a fatherhood role with Lot after Lot's own father Haran died. Lot traveled with Abraham (Abram) when they left Ur of the Chaldeans and continued to be near him until he settled outside of Sodom (Genesis 11:26; 12:4-5; 13).

The Lord had determined to destroy the twin cities of Sodom and Gomorra because of their sinfulness. That is when Abraham prayed to God on Lot's (and other's) behalf. The story ends with Lot and his family being the only ones spared from the Lord's destruction of the two cities (Genesis 19).

Just like the man who brought his son to Jesus, Abraham brought Lot before the Lord and as a result, Lot was spared.

There's an old saying, "*The best defense is a good offense.*" Fathers, if you want to protect your family, stay in prayer. Pray over each one of them and yourself. Pray over your finances and household daily. Get to know God intimately through prayer.

Remember, that ***The Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayers of the righteous.*** (Proverbs 15:29 NLT) and ... ***if we know that God listens when we pray, we are sure that our prayers have already been answered*** (1 John 5:14 CEV).

D. Wage spiritual battles

There are times when you have to wage a spiritual battle for your family, especially your children. It is often easier for us to identify a physical attack than a spiritual attack. But, in both instances we have to go to war as if our children's lives depended on it – which it often does.

If an intruder comes into your home with the intention of robbing you or harming anyone in your home, you will do your best to disarm, disable or defeat

that intruder. Well, Satan is that intruder today. He wants your family. His mission is to **steal and kill and destroy** (John 10:10 NIV). He tries to come into our homes through various means. Let us use the example of objectionable material that is brought in through the television, the radio, the internet and any other means he can use to get in.

What are you going to do? You need to disarm, disable and defeat him.

You can disarm the enemy by denying him access to your home and your children by: (1) teaching and preparing your children for his attack, (2) setting clear and enforceable standards for your home, and (3) monitoring your children's exposure to the electronic airwaves. Once your children know right from wrong and what is acceptable in your home, then they are held accountable. The Bible tells us to:

... take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience

...

2 Corinthian 10:4-6 NIV

When you deny the enemy an entryway into your home, you do not have to throw him out because he cannot get in. But if he does get in, then you have to disable him. This is spiritual warfare. First, implement the three steps above for denying access to your home and add stiff penalties for disobedience. Second, disable the enemy by eliminating the pathways such as using internet security and placing restrictions against certain types of objectionable materials.

But, keep in mind that our intelligent children are very capable of bypassing any restrictions that we can place on them. Therefore, prayer is still the answer. As

our children make decisions in life, we need to continue to take them before the Lord asking Him to work on and in them.

Our job as parents is to set the right example, create the right environment with exposure to things of God, enforce righteous behavior in the household, and keep our children in prayer.

Lastly, you need to also take authority over your family and your home. You can defeat the enemy by driving him out. You can use the authority that you have been given.

I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy ...

Luke 10:19 NLT

If you have a spiritual intruder in your home, you and your wife need to go through the entire house and lay hands on the wall in each room, on the computer, on the television AND each child. Pray to God for protection and for the cleanliness of your home.

Command the enemy, in faith, to leave. Worship and praise God as you go through the entire house. When you praise God, you open up the door for Him to work on your behalf (2 Chronicles 20:22-23; Psalm 8:2).

This might sound a little strange to some of you. But believe me, it works. After all, when you read the Gospels you will see many, many instances of Jesus driving out a demon. But keep in mind, if you do not let them in, then you do not have to put them out.

Also, once you drive them out, you must replace them with good teaching at minimum. Again, implement the three steps above for denying entry to your home. Once you clean house you must keep it clean or things will just revert back to their former condition – or worse (Luke 11:24-26). If you are faced with this type of

spiritual battle in your home, read your Bible and consult your Pastor.

II. MAKE WISE DECISIONS ON BEHALF OF YOUR FAMILY

A. Joseph protected his wife Mary

Joseph showed his propensity to protect when he made the decision to divorce Mary quietly. He was protecting her from humiliation and from death by stoning for her alleged crime.

Joseph was ***not willing to expose her publicly and to shame and disgrace her*** (Matthew 1:19 AMP). Clearly he was concerned about Mary's welfare when he took it upon himself to forgive her and let her go.

Joseph made a Godly decision to spare Mary and to not fall into the devil's trap of seeking revenge for an alleged wrong. Because Joseph chose to protect Mary by not having her disgraced, he was able to marry her and have a fruitful family. God rewarded him for his faithfulness. The whole world has benefited from Joseph's decision to protect Mary who subsequently gave birth to our Savior.

Make good solid Godly decisions for your family. Seek God for direction; listen for His answers. You too may have the opportunity to bless countless people through your wise decisions.

B. The importance of fathers in the marriage process

We have described the marriage process of the *kuddishin* (engagement) and the *nissuin* (wedding ceremony) throughout this book. Now let us look at the two fathers' role in this process to see: (1) how well Jewish tradition protected the family, and (2) the

importance of the fathers, on both sides, to the preparation and success of future generations.

Before a marriage the fathers would take the lead role in forging the *ketubah* (marriage contract), which was seen as a contract between families.

This process gave fathers the opportunity to make decisions or at least influence the lives of their young adult children in a positive way. The father of the bride, through negotiation for the *mohar* (dowry), was able to fend off any unsuitable families or potential son-in-laws.⁹⁰

On the other hand, the father of the bridegroom had to approve the *huppah* (bridal chamber) before the groom could actually get married. In essence, he could have been making sure the groom was ready and able to take care of his future family.⁹¹

These customs put the fathers in a strategic position to impact marriages and future generations in a manner that is generally missing in modern society today. Some families are still concerned about meeting and approving future spouses for their children. But for the most part the father's authority or influence has been seriously diminished.

If fathers today exercised the level of authority seen in Biblical times, our families would be a lot stronger with fewer divorces, separations, single-parent households and births to un-wed parents.

⁹⁰ Since forced marriage did not dominate in Jewish culture in the first century, the bride actually had a say-so in who she would marry.

⁹¹ A further discussion of the traditions in Jewish marriages could include the esteemed role of the *Shadchan* (matchmaker) in bringing the families together.

III. PROVIDE A SAFE, STABLE AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT FOR YOUR FAMILY

A. Joseph's household was conducive to Jesus' development

Joseph and Mary provided a safe and secure family environment for the boy Jesus to grow and learn. After Jesus returned to Nazareth when he was 12 years old he was **obedient to them** as he **grew in wisdom and stature**. Therefore, we know that He was in a place that provided him the opportunity to mature.

Every child needs this type of environment where they can be comfortable and safe as they progress through the stages of childhood development into their teens and beyond.

Fathers need to give their children room to grow, mentally. For example, often children learn to make good decisions by exercising what I call their *decisions-making muscles*. They need to be able to make their own mistakes so that they can learn from them – within reason of course. When they make good decisions, expand the parameters and when they consistently make poor decisions then the parameters need to contract.

This type of training gives fathers an opportunity to teach. Most children will be anxious to learn if it means more autonomy in their hands.

Another example is to let children explore their interests in sport, recreation, dance and hobbies etc. When children are able to get involved in a regular activity that pleases them, they have an opportunity to learn and to develop themselves. This helps in the development of their self-esteem and in determining career paths.

B. Be a teacher and a coach for your children

Joseph nurtured the boy Jesus into a man by providing for him and being a Godly teacher, coach and example. No other point is more central to the reason for writing this book. Joseph was called to raise the boy Jesus and he did. The world needs more Josephs to protect their children through love and a commitment to their future.

The alternative to Joseph's type of fatherhood involvement is what we see in father-absence today. Men have left their children's rearing to the mothers. Statistics show that children without fathers in the home are at a higher risk for academic, social and psychological problems. These problems include higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse, high school dropouts, criminal activity, teen pregnancies, suicides, runaways and rape.⁹²

The solution to this problem lies in the fathers themselves. We have said throughout this book that Joseph was able to take care of his family because he was submitted to and served God. When men who are not taking responsibility for their families learn that the solution to all of their problems is in the submission to God, then they will begin to come to the Lord in large numbers.

If it is up to men who know the Lord to show men who do not know God. Godly men must lead by the example of their success and that of their children and families. We make God look good when God makes us look good – and vice-versa.

⁹² "Fact Sheet on Father Absence," *Reconciled Fathers Network*, <http://rfathers.net/blog/fact-sheet-on-father-absence/> (accessed February 1, 2009).

IV. PROVIDE PHYSICAL PROTECTION

A. Joseph went long distances to protect his family

First Joseph provided safe passage for Mary to Bethlehem where the baby Jesus was born.

Next, Joseph had to physically remove his family to protect the life of Jesus and God's plan for salvation. God moved him to get up in the middle of night to take his family to safety. This effort to escape the killing ambitions of Herod the Great meant walking 350 miles from Nazareth to Egypt.

On the return trip Joseph sought to avoid potential danger from King Herod's son, Archelaus. Because of his uncertainty, Joseph went to God to find out how to protect his family from the harm that could have come from the new monarch.

Joseph example is a blueprint for men today. Go the extra mile to protect your family and go to God when you are not sure. Just ask Him. He will lead you.

B. Abraham rescued Lot

Another example of physical protection requires the father to go to war to fight for his children.

Even before the Lord's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham had previously rescued Lot by going to war for him. A fourteen-year war between neighboring kings ended with the capture of the citizens of Sodom, including Lot and his family. Abraham put together an army and rescued the possessions and the people of Sodom from the capturing kings (Genesis 14).

If someone is attacking your family, you have to defend them. In the opening section of this chapter we talked about waging a spiritual battle for our home. The

same principle is true for a physical battle. If a bully is beating up on your child, you most definitely will stop him or her.

V. GIVE "TOUGH LOVE" WHEN IT IS NEEDED

A. Keep your children in order

As has been recounted several times in this book, the 12-year-old Jesus was **obedient** to his parents when he returned to Nazareth. To say that He was **obedient** to them at that point could also mean that He was not **obedient** to them on at least one other occasion.

Clearly when Jesus stayed behind to discuss the scriptures with the teachers of the law He did so without His parents' permission. Joseph and Mary actually thought Jesus was with them.

Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him.

Luke 2:44-45 NIV

When they found Him, Mary scolded Him immediately.

His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

Luke 2:48 NIV

Since we know that Jesus was without sin, then He must have thought it was okay to stay behind in Jerusalem – without having to discuss it with His parents.

Let us venture to say that every child that ever lived has

probably thought the same thing at one time or another – and then they had to be corrected by their parents. Jesus, even though He is the Son of God, had to be put straight as well. That is why the Bible tells us that:

Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them.

Luke 2:51 NIV

This story shows one aspect of what is called *tough love*, having to reprimand your children for their own good. Giving love is not only about kisses and hugs and being nice. If a parent cannot put their foot down and bring their child into order, the child can hurt themselves and others through their immaturity.

God told us that He disciplines those He loves:

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”

... Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12:5-11 NIV

B. Eli failed to give tough love to his sons

Another father-son combination to examine is that of Eli, the priest of Shiloh and the Judge (leader) of Israel, and his sons, Hophni and Phinehas. In 1 Samuel 2:12-36 we are told of Eli’s two wicked sons who disrespected the offerings made to the Lord and ***slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.*** Eli tried to correct his grown sons but he failed to stop their behavior.

... I (God) told him that I would judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about; his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them.

1 Samuel 3:13 NIV (parentheses added)

Eli had the responsibility to: (1) counsel his sons to make sure they knew the error of their ways; (2) to reprimand them with a clear rebuke and make sure that they understood the consequences for continued incorrect behavior; and (3) to remove them if the counseling and reprimanding failed to produce the desired change in behavior.

It appears that Eli did the first two (1 Samuel 2:22-25), but not the third. Eli should have removed them from their positions and from access to the offerings and the women. But he did not.

By not removing them, Eli allowed his sons to continue in their wicked behavior and in taking advantage of the people of Israel. The result: he and his two sons died on the same day – not to mention that Israel also lost a war and the Ark of the Covenant was seized by the Philistines on that same day.

We cannot stand by and let our children destroy themselves or others. If we know that our children are engaged in wrongful behavior we have the responsibility to take corrective action. With mature or older children, follow these three steps wherever possible: counsel, reprimand, removal. With young children, because they are not dealing with the same reasoning and moral capabilities, we should insist on immediate corrective action. If we fail to do what is required of us as parents, then we too are at fault.

VI. FIGHT FOR YOUR CHILDREN

In sum, protecting your families is necessary. It is the role of the husband and father as head of the family. How we protect them is largely dependent on the circumstances. None of which can succeed without God's involvement. But with God we can be empowered, enabling us to succeed.

As fathers we should understand that: (1) our ability to protect our families comes from God, (2) we will give protection through a variety of means including: physical, spiritual, mental, prayer, discipline, counseling and more; and (3) knowing when and how to protect our families will come from God as we are led by the Holy Spirit *into all truth* (John 16:13 KJV).

The example of Abraham and Lot is a good illustration. Abraham was willing to go to war to protect his nephew. He was also willing to battle in prayer for him as well by going repeatedly before the Lord to get the job done. If Abraham had not been willing to do physical battle and prayer intercession for his nephew, Lot would have been destroyed! Abraham used the means necessary for each situation.

The man who brought his son to Jesus is another example. The man responded in the manner that was necessary and correct at the time. Initially the father brought his son for healing. But, in the process he found out that he had to deal with himself before his son could be healed. Fortunately for both of them, he did. He accepted Jesus Christ, repented and they were both better off for it.

Joseph the Carpenter was the same. He continued to give of himself for his family and adapt to the given situations and circumstances to protect his family. In each instance, God led him in what to do and how to do

it. Without God, Joseph could not have been the successful parent that he was. With God, Joseph did what he had to do to protect Jesus and God's plan for salvation.

Joseph is the example for fathers to follow. Submit to God; be on His program to protect your children.

VII. IMPLEMENTING FATHERHOOD PRINCIPLE #7 BE A PROTECTOR

1. Provide spiritual covering for your family through faith in God and prayer protection for your children. Pray daily for each of your children to help prevent unnecessary trouble.
2. Take authority over your home.
3. Make sound and wise Godly decisions.
4. Make sure your children hear the gospel and have the opportunity to give their hearts to the Lord.
5. Be a coach and teacher to your children.
6. Provide the environment for your children to grow and learn.
7. Give them tough love when necessary.

EPILOGUE:

THE PURPOSE-DRIVEN FATHER

Writing this book on Joseph the Carpenter has been a very exciting adventure. From the moment that God spoke to me about writing this book in 2005 to its final completion in 2009. I remember that fate-filled day as I prayed in St. Mary Church in Manhattan during my lunch break. I had just finished writing another fatherhood book, *On the Outside Looking In: Hope for Separated Fathers Who Want To Be Good Fathers*.

As a prayed it was as if God spoke to me in that little room and said, “If you really want to know about fatherhood, write a book on Joseph the Carpenter.” I was stunned and chills went over my body. The mere thought of writing such a book was startling and overwhelming. Even in my awe I knew this project had not been done before. I wondered why there were not tons of book on this man and why God would make such a challenge to me.

A flood of ideas began to fill my mind. My prayer stopped and I just sat there in amazement. I knew then that this God-anointed project would be significant and enormous. For the next few years I keep thinking about that moment as I finished other projects and took notes of how I had planned to approach writing this book.

Finally in January 2008 I set aside 2 months to write and publish this book. Well, one-and-a-half years later, I am still learning about Joseph the Carpenter. The book is finished. But, the revelations are continuing. This is a research topic that seems to never end. I fact, I am

planning two other books somewhat related as a result of the work done on this book.

For Joseph the Carpenter, someone who has very little written about him in the Bible, there sure is a lot to say. My eyes have been opened so much about who God is and how he blesses us.

The fatherhood principles that I was able to explore through the life of Joseph the Carpenter show clearly that God's way of organizing the family is what we need today. *Joseph the Carpenter is a man of God for the twenty-first century.* The world is in great need of this role model for fathers today.

It is no accident that Joseph the Carpenter's story is being revealed through the fatherhood principles in this book. This is God's plan for this time in history the same way that Joseph's life was God's plan for his time in history.

Joseph the Carpenter was a central, crucial and necessary part of God's plan for Jesus' life on earth and thus for God's plan for salvation. Joseph was a purpose-driven man. He was:

- a Godly man,
- a Man of character,
- a Godly husband,
- a Family man,
- a Teacher,
- a Provider, and
- a Protector.

Joseph the Carpenter is the model for men, husbands and fathers today. Men, take a leap of faith and commit to being a Joseph the Carpenter in your home.

Please enjoy this last chapter in the *Fatherhood*

Principles of Joseph the Carpenter. As you read how Joseph fulfilled prophecy and God's purposes, think of yourself and how you fulfill God's purpose with your own family.

I. JOSEPH WAS A PURPOSE-DRIVEN MAN

Before I formed you in the womb I knew [and] approved of you [as My chosen instrument], and before you were born I separated and set you apart, consecrating you; [and] I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.

Jeremiah 1:5 AMP

Like Jeremiah the prophet, Joseph was chosen by God before he was born, to fulfill a very special purpose. Joseph was enlisted, endowed and empowered by God to be Jesus' earthly father and he fulfilled that role for which he was created.

Like Joseph, each of us was created by God with a specific purpose in mind. Each of us was placed by God in the specific time and location in history that we find ourselves. All of our children were specifically placed with each of us to care for, train, protect and to help prepare for their own futures. According to God's plan, Joseph and Mary made it possible for Jesus to have a relatively typical upbringing and Jewish family life in Nazareth.

II. JOSEPH'S ROLE IN BIBLICAL PROPHECY

The presence of Joseph is clearly evident in prophecy, even though, to the best of my knowledge, he was never specifically spoken of in prophecy. However, several events in prophecy necessitated the presence of Joseph fulfilling a crucial role in the birth and life of Jesus. Here are four examples from the many

prophecies about Jesus' early years.

First, the Messiah would be born to a virgin mother (Isaiah 7:14). Scripture shows that this was fulfilled in Luke 1:26-27, 34-35 and Matthew 1:18-25:

Jesus was born to a “virgin-mother,” but she was not a “single-mother.” Mary had to be a virgin *and* she also had to have a husband. This could only happen naturally under certain historical and religious circumstances which Jewish law and tradition made possible.

The story of how Joseph and Mary became parents of King Jesus shows that God is a perfect planner and that His timing is impeccable. His plan for Jesus' earthly life was worked out in the context of this historical situation with these two Jewish parents that God had personally prepared for Himself and for each other.

Obviously, Joseph played a big part in the fulfillment of this prophecy for a virgin mother.

Second, the Messiah would be a descendant of King David (Jeremiah 23:5). Scripture shows that this was fulfilled in Matthew 1:1-20 and Luke 1:26-27, 2:4 3:23-32.

Since lineage is normally determined by the birth of the father, Joseph had to come from the house of David which of course he did.⁹³

Third, the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Scripture shows this was fulfilled in Matthew 2:1 and Luke 2:4-7.

The question of having to go to Bethlehem, as

⁹³ It is believed by some that Mary was also a descendant of the House of David and thus she fulfilled this prophecy from a biological perspective while Joseph fulfilled it from a legal perspective. “Is Mary a Daughter of David?” *Mary of Nazareth: Her Life, Her Museum, Her Site*, <http://www.mariedenazareth.com/280.3.html?&L=1&L=1> (accessed June 11, 2008).

discussed in the chapter on *The Story of Joseph the Carpenter* was because Joseph, like all descendants of David, had to go to David's birthplace to be counted in the census.

Additionally, Mary could not have done the 70 mile trip to Bethlehem alone, in her ninth month of pregnancy. There had to be a man, her husband Joseph, to take her to Bethlehem.

Fourth, the Messiah would come out of Egypt (Hosea 11:1). Scripture shows this was fulfilled in Matthew 2:13-15.

As with the trip to Bethlehem, the same is true with the 350-mile trip to Egypt in Africa. Mary would not have done it alone, this time with a child around two years old.

Thus, it is clear that God intended for Mary and Jesus to be in the company of a man, her husband Joseph, who was leading them, taking care of them and facilitating for the accomplishment of God's plan.

In spite of Joseph not being specifically mentioned in prophecy, we can see that part of his purpose was clearly to facilitate the fulfillment of these and other prophecies related to Jesus Christ, the Messiah. He and Mary were simply servants in God's hands.

III. JOSEPH FULFILLED HIS GOD-GIVEN PURPOSE

As a man of God, Joseph understood that God's thoughts are so much higher than his (Isaiah 55:9) and that ***it is the Lord's purpose that prevails***. (Proverbs 19:21 NIV). This is why Joseph did not hesitate when called by the Lord (Matthew 1:18-25). He humbly submitted to God's plan, abandoning his own.

Marrying Mary, securing her and Jesus' safety and raising Jesus was all part of Joseph's God-given purpose in life. Joseph was specifically called (and gifted) to

facilitate God's plan in this role.

There is a similar aspect of Joseph's purpose-driven life to that of John the Baptist. Both of them had a specific responsibility within God's plan during Jesus' lifetime and prior to His ministry. Both fulfilled their purpose then left the scene. John the Baptist helped prepare the people for Jesus' ministry; Joseph helped prepare Jesus.

Like John the Baptist, Joseph understood his purpose. When questioned about himself and Jesus' new ministry, John the Baptist explained his purpose and relative position very well:

John replied, "God in heaven appoints each person's work. You yourselves know how plainly I told you that I am not the Messiah. I am here to prepare the way for him--that is all.

The bride will go where the bridegroom is. A bridegroom's friend rejoices with him. I am the bridegroom's friend, and I am filled with joy at his success. He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.

John 3:27-30 NLT (underline added)

In his answer above, John the Baptist was content to fulfill his God-given purpose and assignment and then step out of the way so the focus could be on Jesus.

Joseph also seemed content to have fulfilled his purpose and assignment. Then, at the right time and as life circumstances dictated, Joseph also stepped out of the way.

Joseph's absence at the point of Jesus beginning His ministry must have been part of God's plan just as the

exit by John the Baptist was part of God's plan.

The Apostle Paul talked about this concept as well when he said he had ***fought a good fight*** and it was time to go home to be with Our Lord.

For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:

2 Timothy 4:6-7 KJV

Just like Paul, after Joseph fulfilled his purpose here on earth, there is no doubt that he went home to be with our Lord.

IV. IMPLEMENTING PURPOSE-DRIVEN FATHERHOOD

God taught us that parenting requires a lot of love. It also requires a lot of skill and patience which can only be gained on the job. Parenting means on-the-job-training! Joseph did not know what to expect when he obeyed God and took Mary as his wife. He could not fully anticipate that the seed planted in her by the Holy Spirit would grow to be the God-man child, Jesus. But he did rise to the occasion and rely on God for everything that was to come.

There is much that we as fathers can learn from Joseph the Carpenter about fatherhood, about being a good husband and about being a strong man. What we know about Joseph the man, his character and his spiritual life can shed light on how we as men and fathers can be close to God, our wives and our children.

Here for the last time are seven more suggestions on how to implement Godly fatherhood as modeled by Joseph the Carpenter.

1. *Know and fulfill* the purpose that God has set for your life. (If you do not know it, do as

Joseph did and get close to God and listen for his voice. As it says in James 1:5-8, **ask God.**)

2. Be a Godly husband. Be excited about your wife as friend, lover and co-laborer.
3. Fulfill your fatherhood role and responsibility to the best of your ability – as you seek God's blessings and guidance in becoming the best father you can be.
4. Know the needs and desires of each of your children.
5. Help each of your children to know and to develop in their God-given gifts, talents and abilities.
6. Help each of your children to fulfill their God-given goals.
7. Learn to recognize the “opportunities” and the “direction” you can and should give to each of your children.

Then do it!

I hope that you have enjoyed reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it and learning about the life of this great man, Joseph.

As I finish this book I want to leave you with a principle from my own father that sticks in my head even forty years after I first heard it:

“Strive to improve yourself – not prove yourself.”
(Jewel A. Bennett, circa 1968)

The lesson he tried to teach me was twofold: (1) there is always room for improvement, and (2) if I try too hard to prove myself, that is – impress people with who I am, what I have done or know, then I will miss what I need to learn. I am truly thankful for this lesson.

Please feel free to contact me at any point through our websites. May God truly bless you and your family.

Akili Kumasi
Reconciled Fathers Network
June 2009

Do You Have a Relationship With God?

The Bible tells us that:

**... if you confess with your mouth,
“Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart
that God raised him from the dead, you
will be saved.**

Romans 10:9 KJV

HAVE YOU ACCEPTED JESUS AS YOUR LORD?

If you do not have a relationship with God – through accepting Jesus as Lord – then I invite you to pray the following prayer:

Lord, I come before you today to confess that I accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior and that I believe you raised Him from the dead. I believe that He died for my sins and that only through Him can I be saved.

Lord, please forgive me of all my sins and accept me into your kingdom. Lord, I welcome the Holy Spirit into my heart today.

I thank you Lord. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Congratulations! Now, as a born-again Christian you can best maintain your walk with God by attending a Bible teaching church, studying and reading God’s Word (the Bible) daily, praying continuously and fellowshiping with other serious Christians. A good place to start your Bible reading is with the book/gospel of John. If you have questions or need help please write to me at:

Akili Kumasi,
Reconciled Fathers Network
P.O. Box 80275, Brooklyn, NY 11208
Akili@rFathers.net

APPENDIX I:

JOSEPH THE CARPENTER FOCUS GROUPS

I. WHAT IS A JOSEPH THE CARPENTER FOCUS GROUPS?

A **Joseph the Carpenter Focus Group** is a small group of men who come together to help better themselves as men, husbands and fathers. The Focus Groups were originally designed around discussing the book, *Fatherhood Principles of Joseph the Carpenter: Examples of Godly Fatherhood*. The groups should meet once very two weeks and discuss one chapter per meeting.

II. HOW CAN I START A FOCUS GROUP?

Any man (whether or not he is a father) can launch and lead a Joseph the Carpenter Focus Group. Once you have the determination and commitment to work with men in their (and your) Godly fatherhood development – make a list of 20 men you would like to invite to meet and discuss this book. Invite all of them for a time convenient for most is not all of the men. Use the discussion questions on our website as a guide for your discussion.

See instructions on our websites: www.rFather.net and www.josephthecarpenterbook.com. These papers are consistently updated to give you the latest information.

1. What is a Joseph the Carpenter Focus Group?

2. How to Conduct a Joseph the Carpenter Focus Group Meeting
3. How to Launch and Lead a Joseph the Carpenter Focus Group
4. Joseph the Carpenter Focus Group Fatherhood Book List

III. FATHERHOOD BOOK LIST

After completion of the first book, *Fatherhood Principles of Joseph the Carpenter*, some or all of the men will decide to continue with the group meetings and will move on to the **Joseph the Carpenter Fatherhood Book List**. This list features 27 books in nine (9) categories (primarily on Christian Fatherhood) by Christian authors.

Contact me at any time for questions about starting a group at akili@rFathers.net.

Akili Kumasi
Reconciled Fathers Network
P.O. Box 80275
Brooklyn, NY 11208
www.rFathers.net
www.JosephTheCarpenterBook.com

APPENDIX II:

THE RECONCILED FATHERS NETWORK

... turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.

Malachi 4:6 NIV

IV. THE PROBLEM OF FATHER-ABSENCE

Problems in fatherhood existed at least as far back as the Old Testament. In the very last verse of the Old Testament God issued the profound warning above.

Nevertheless, the situation has only gotten worse. Twenty-three million (23,000,000) children in the U.S. live without their father, primarily the result of divorces, separations, and births to un-married parents. As God warned, fathers need to be reconciled to their children.

The Reconciled Fathers Network has compiled a free **Fact-Sheet on Father-Absence** with statistics and analysis of the impact of father-absence on children and families. To receive a free copy go to our website at RFATHERS.NET or send a self-address stamped envelope to:

The Reconciled Fathers Network
P.O. Box 80275
Brooklyn, NY 11208.

V. WHAT IS A SEPARATED-FATHER?

A separated-father is a father who does not live with his children because of divorce, parental separation or

births to un-married parents.

VI. WHAT IS A RECONCILED-FATHER?

We defined a separated-father as a father who is not living with his children. But many separated-fathers are also reconciled-fathers, that is, they are taking responsibility for their children and they have an on-going nurturing relationship with them.

VII. THE MISSION OF THE RECONCILED FATHERS NETWORK

1. to show separated-fathers how to use the Power of God's Love to be Godly fathers to their children
2. to help strengthen families by strengthening fathers
3. to be a major resource of information for (and on) separated-reconciled fathers
4. to introduce non-Christian separated-fathers to the saving grace of Jesus Christ
5. to initiate and support programs to help separated-fathers be good and Godly fathers

We thank you for your interest and your support in "**Helping Set a New Standard of Fatherhood.**"

Akili Kumasi
Reconciled Fathers Network
akili@rFathers.net

APPENDIX III: 20 CHARACTERISTICS OF A FAMILY-CENTERED LIFE

By Bryan Davis⁹⁴

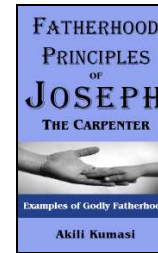
6. Mom and Dad have a consistent date night alone together
7. Dad has scheduled one-on-one time with each of his children
8. Entire family gathers for dinner at least 4 times a week
9. Dad texts, e-mails or calls each of his children at least once during the day
10. A monthly family movie night
11. A monthly family board game night
12. Saturday chores are done with the kids helping
13. At least once every three months Dad brings lunch to school for his kids
14. Dad prays with each of his children before they go to bed
15. Weekly church attendance

⁹⁴ Included by permission of Bryan Davis, "20 characteristics of a family-centered life," *AllProDad*, <http://www.allprodad.com/playbook/viewarticle.php?art=371> (accessed March 16, 2009).

16. Three TV shows per week are watched by the entire family (with commercials muted)
17. Dad's job does not keep him working a lot of late nights or weekends
18. Entire family has at least one week of vacation time together per year
19. Mom and Dad attend at least one marriage strengthening conference per year
20. Family attempts camping at least once
21. Dad attends or coordinates a Daddy/Daughter Dance
22. Dad personally knows all of his children's teachers and is involved in the PTA
23. Dad's time with his buddies more often than not includes everyone's kids
24. More family activities are planned outdoors than indoors
25. Dad honors his own parents

Books Available from
GIL PUBLICATIONS.COM

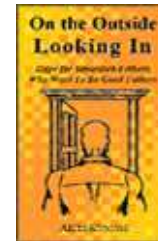
Fatherhood Book Series
at REATHERS.org



Fatherhood Principles of Joseph the Carpenter: Examples of Godly Fatherhood

PRICE: \$10.95 - ISBN-13: 978-0-9802185-1-0

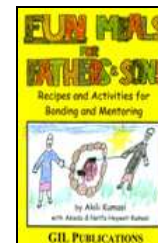
- Who was this great man of God?
- A man of character, strength and humility
- A spiritual man and father
- One of the greatest examples of Godly Fatherhood



On the Outside Looking In: Hope for Separated Fathers Who Want To Be Good Fathers

PRICE: \$10.95 - ISBN-13: 978-0-9626035-5-6

- Gain strategies for making Fatherhood work
- Use 7 Principles of Good Fatherhood to train children
- Be informed - issues facing divorced & absent fathers
- Gain cooperation from children's mother



Fun Meals for Fathers and Sons: Recipes & Activities for Bonding & Mentoring

PRICE: \$5.95 - ISBN-13: 978-0-9626035-1-8

- Cook up some fond memories
- Easy recipes-fun activities
- Need help in fathering - here's some food for thought!
- Bond with your children – easy over a Fun Meal



Bible Word Search, Volume III: Fathers in the Bible

PRICE: \$7.95 - ISBN-13: 978-0-9626035-4-9

- Puzzles emphasize the power & love of God the Father
- The Biblical fathers – good and bad
- 80 puzzles mean fun and games while learning
- Great fun with puzzles - great information

Do You Have a Relationship With God?

The Bible tells us that:

... if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:9 KJV

HAVE YOU ACCEPTED JESUS AS YOUR LORD?

If you do not have a relationship with God – through accepting Jesus as Lord – then I invite you to please pray the following prayer:

Lord, I come before you today to confess that I accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior and that I believe you raised Him from the dead. I believe that He died for my sins and that only through Him can I be saved.

Lord, please forgive me of all my sins and accept me into your Kingdom. Lord, I welcome the Holy Spirit into my heart today.

I thank you, Lord, in Jesus' Name, Amen.

Congratulations! Now, you - as a born-again Christian can best maintain your walk with God by:

- Praying daily – ask God to help you with the challenges in your life and to bring you closer to Himself
- Read and Study God's Word (the Bible) daily
- Attend a Bible teaching church
- Fellowship with other serious Christians

A good place to start your Bible reading is with the book of John.

If you have questions or need help please write to me at:

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