

Some of the characters in the Nativity story are often overlooked because of the focus on the Christ Child. But when we look closely at some of the other people in the story we see characters like Joseph and his courage and what it can teach us about following God.

The Courage Of Joseph

Matthew 1:18-25, 2:13-14, 19-23

What Fear Does To Us

Fear Makes Us _____

"As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up, and there were the Egyptians, marching after them. They were terrified and cried out to the LORD." Exodus 14:10 (NIV)

Fear Makes Us _____

"They said to Moses, 'Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you brought us to the desert to die?'" Exodus 14:11 (NIV)

Fear Makes Us _____

*"What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?"
Exodus 14:11b (NIV)*

Fear Makes Us _____

*"Didn't we say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians'?"
Exodus 14:12 (NIV)*

Fear Makes Us _____

*"It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!"
Exodus 14:12b (NIV)*

How To Overcome Our Fear

1. _____

*"I haven't forgotten you. Don't be afraid. I am with you. Don't tremble with fear. I am your God. I will make you strong, as I protect you with my arm and give you victories."
Isaiah 41:9b-10 (CEV)*

*"He strengthens those who are weak and tired...those who trust in the LORD for help will find their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not grow weak."
Isaiah 40:29-31 (GN)*

Check out Matthew 14:25-32

*“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus ... so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”
Hebrews 12:2,3 (NIV) ... also see Colossians 3:1-2*

2. _____

“I will teach you wisdom’s way and lead you in straight paths ... I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.” Proverbs 4:11; Psalms 32:8 (NLT)

“He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.” Psalms 25:9 (NLT)

3. _____ and _____

“Moses answered the people, ‘Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you’...Then the LORD said to Moses ...Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.” Exodus 14:13-16 (NIV)

Why Is This Hard To Do?

We Don’t Really Know _____

“God keeps every promise he makes.” Proverbs 30:5 (GN)

We Don’t Really Believe _____

*“When I am afraid, O LORD Almighty, I put my trust in you. I trust in God and am not afraid; I praise him for what he has promised. What can a mere human being do to me?”
Psalms 56:3-4 (GN)*

We Don’t Really Understand _____

*“The LORD is my light and my salvation – so why should I be afraid...why should I tremble?”
Psalms 27:1 (NLT)*

*“I am the LORD, the God of all people.
Nothing is too difficult for me.” Jeremiah 32:27 (GN)*

Personal Study - Growth Homework

GETTING STARTED

What's the biggest risk you've ever taken? What is the most fearful time you remember in your life – a time when you needed courage?

What do you think God was trying to tell you in this weekend's message on courage?

TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

Imagine for a moment you are Joseph and you just find yourself in this situation. What do you think he was feeling? This sudden change had to be shocking and probably shatter every dream he had of the wedding and starting his life with Mary. Think about it, your future wife is pregnant and you are not responsible and somehow you have to convince others this is a God miracle. What would you be thinking – what would you be fearful of – what would you do?

Just like Joseph there will be times in our life when we are planning to go left and God says go right. What enabled Joseph (and would help us) to adjust?

How do you respond to situations in your life when your plans suddenly Change - when God takes you in a different direction than you planned?

The Bible says Joseph was a "righteous man." What character qualities & beliefs do you think Joseph needed to have to not freak out when God told him what was going on and totally abandon God and Mary? What did he believe about God?

Jeremiah 32:27 (NLT) says, *"I am the LORD ... is anything too hard for me?"* In your life when have you needed to believe this is true for you?

What do you take away from 2 Corinthians 4:7-10 & 15-18?

GOING DEEPER

Before the nation Israel faced the Red Sea they watched God and experienced God's amazing power in the plagues (Ex 7-12) as well as the pillar of fire and cloud leading them out of Egypt (Ex 13). Yet they panicked and freaked out in fear. If you look beyond the Red Sea God continued to demonstrate His faithfulness and power by providing manna & quail for the nation Israel (Ex 16) and water from the rock (Ex 17). The nation Israel had all of this physical and visible evidence and still they choose fear. WHY? Why do you think they still panicked at the Red Sea and throughout their journey in the desert living in so much fear? How are we like them?

What do these verses say to us in light of our study?

2 Corinthians 5:7

1 Corinthians 1:9

Colossians 3:1-2

Concerning fear, how does the enemy use fear to keep us from stepping out, using our gifts to serve God and others, and sharing what God has done in our life with others?

Why is it important for us to share with others
in the family of God what God has done for us?

Read Isaiah 41:10 & Ephesians 3:20. In the past or present what have you seen as impossible for God to do in your life or in the life of another? What do you need to have courage about and believe is possible for God to do now? What fear, need, area or situation in your life is fear keeping you from letting go and launching out - moving forward? What do you need to believe God can do the impossible?

Specifically what do you need to let go of so you can launch out?