



# Marriage Growth-Track

## Week 2 - Day 1

### Joseph and Mary

By Glen & Rebecca Davis

*This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."*

*All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us").*

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

Matthew 1:18-24

There's so much going on in these few verses besides the much-anticipated birth of Jesus. So very much. No doubt, Joseph was shocked and surprised to learn of Mary's pregnancy. He was probably angry, confused, and more than just a little suspicious, too. This is what we see in these verses:

- Joseph decided to divorce Mary when things went differently than he had planned;
- This is what he would have been expected to do and was why he considered it his best option;
- God gave Joseph instructions that differed from his plan;
- When Joseph understood what God wanted him to do, he completely altered what he originally intended to do;
- Joseph decided to obey God's will for his marriage over what was considered an acceptable and expected solution for his circumstances

Joseph is one of the best example of commitment in all the Bible. By all customs and laws of his time, Joseph would have been well within his rights to leave Mary with or without marrying her. But when confronted with the Word of God via an angel, Joseph chose the path of God—a path of commitment and honor and obedience.

**Honorable? Yes.      Easy? Not so much.**

These are no small or easy character traits to master and yet, they can make all the difference in the world in the breadth and depth of your relationship with your spouse. Because divorce is so very commonplace, it is the rare couple that enters into marriage without at least one (if not many!) instances of divorce in their immediate family background. When divorce is considered a viable alternative to heated disagreements or seemingly incompatible spouses, the likelihood of partners separating goes up exponentially.

When the challenges come (and they always do) or when life seems less fulfilling and thrilling than hoped for, divorce can seem to be the easy answer for so, so many couples.

**Can't agree on the budget? Call a lawyer.**

**Tired of your spouse's bothersome habits and lackluster approach to your marriage? Start planning an exit strategy.**

**Think everyone else has it better and easier than you? Pack up the kids and head to mom's.**

Except that there's more to the fallout than just the so-called quick-fix of divorce. What so many think is 'the easy way out' through divorce is anything but easy. Beyond that, it's not part of the original plan God intended for marriages. In fact, it's the complete opposite.

When the responsibilities of everyday life—jobs, kids, money, in-laws—creep into what was once a joyful relationship, ask God to show you what true commitment in marriage looks like. Ask Him to help you follow His instructions for marriage, to discover new solutions to old problems, and to view your marriage as He does—a forever thing.

No doubt, it's hard to love people when they're at their most unlovable, but it is what God would have us do. And it can be downright impossible to show respect and honor when your spouse has done little to earn it, but God says to do so anyway. Just as God gave Joseph a completely different course to follow when he committed to marry his pregnant fiancé, God has given us a dramatically different set of instructions for how to make our marriages last and thrive.

It won't always be easy. It probably won't even be your first instinct at first. But it will be the best investment of your whole self you can make in an earthly relationship. And one thing is for sure—your commitment to model a marriage after God's plan for this most holy union won't look like most of the other relationships you see.

**But then again, do you really want it to?**

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What do you think of Joseph's character, in reaction to Mary's pregnancy? What do these traits look like to you- honor, true commitment, respect?

2. How does God provide you with opportunities to better yourself? What gets in the way of you seeing them?

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**Action Steps:**

Pick a character trait about yourself (not your spouse) that you feel could use some work. Study the trait, and make a plan for how you can bolster the traits to strengthen your marriage.

**Prayer:**

"Father, thank you for having a perfect plan for marriage and giving us the ultimate example of commitment. You are a God of unfailing faithfulness who loves unconditionally. Please help us to have an understanding of your plan for marriage, both when times are good and when they are challenging. Give us wisdom through the years as we walk through what seem to be unsurmountable challenges so that we can ultimately experience the fullness of all that you intended marriage to be."