



Sermon Study - Conversation Guide

December 10, 2023

“Faith When You Have Nothing Left”

Matthew 1:18-25

This guide is a discipleship tool for personal reflection, family and group discussion, and for Table Talk on Sundays @10:40 am and 12:15 pm on the Lowell Patio

Coastal Community Church
mycoastal.org

NOTES: Faith When You Have Nothing Left (Matt. 1:18-25)
Pastor Andy Rock

For the next four weeks we are going to be talking about the Christmas story. This week is Joseph's story.

1:18 *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.*

Engagement in those days meant Joseph and Mary were married, but not living or sleeping together. It lasted about a year so that the two kids could get to know each other. But then, Mary has this crazy moment when the angel Gabriel says she's pregnant. She tells Joseph. Joseph knows the shame she will experience. It's the life of an outcast.

1:19 *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.*

The Jewish Law says that you should stone a woman caught in adultery, publicly. Why does Joseph, who is faithful to the law, decide to divorce Mary quietly? Joseph didn't want Mary destroyed, even though Mary was destroying him. He didn't want her to be hurt, though she was hurting him. He didn't want her put to shame, even though he would be shamed.

Have you ever lived with someone or been connected to someone who wrecked you? Sometimes we need to forgive, reconcile, and figure it out. We go to counseling. We have hard conversations. We talk about our anger and hurt with them. We forgive. Sometimes we need to transition the relationship because the hurt and betrayal is too deep. But we also keep our heart intact by being gentle and kind. So, we love them from a distance.

This was Joseph's plan. But Mary asked Joseph to have enough faith to move past the law, even move past 'what would be kind,' and go on the adventure of 'let's trust God with everything, even if it means we have nothing.' Joseph said no. Why did Joseph do that? Everyone would think he got Mary pregnant. He would lose everything. It all felt too risky. Joseph was dealing with self-ambition, trusting in his own plans rather than seeking to know God's plan.

What does God do when we're lost like this? He doesn't push us away. The opposite is true. God moves closer to us. He continues to offer us direction and blessings so we can trust Him, just as He did with Joseph.

1:20 *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. 21 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.*

God reveals that Mary is telling the truth. But what does God not say? How to get from point A to point B. I've always wanted to know the plan. But that's not how faith works. Faith is letting God be the Master over the plan. God always has a master plan, and it's always what's best for us.

1:22 *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us")*

God has an amazing plan for you! But I prioritize me in my self-ambition because at the root of this strategy is the lie that I'm all alone. Jesus is called Immanuel – "God with us." What I never understood is that when I rely on Jesus in my moments of fear, I get stronger because He is with me. He always carries me through. This is what happened with Joseph.

1:24 *When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.*

Joseph woke up. I love this. Joseph woke up and realized Mary wasn't crazy, her invitation to the adventure of saying yes to God was worth following. So, Joseph did what the Angel told him to do.

1:25 *But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.*

Jesus would look at his dad, Joseph, and see a man who had sacrificed his money, his reputation, his time, his comfort, all for our Heavenly Father's plan and not his own. He would do the same, sacrificing His life for us all. You have no idea the impact you will have as you choose to give up your self-ambition and trust God. You will change generations. So, trust His loving plan for you.

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES: Tips for great conversation

- We are here to share our experiences, not teach or fix each other.
- Show respect by listening to one another, asking clarifying questions.
- If you're quick to share, allow space and time for others to speak up.
- If you're slow to speak, your experience is valuable so please share.

ICE BREAKER

When have you seen your plans fail but God work it all out?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of the message was most encouraging to you? What part do you find challenging?

GOSPEL EXCHANGE (REDEMPTIVE WORK)

Jesus asks us to give Him our burdens (Matthew 11:28-29), whatever they may be (a lie we have believed about God or ourselves, our hurt or negative emotions, or even our concerns for loved ones), so He can carry them for us and give us His peace (wholeness and completeness) in exchange.

What do you want to exchange with Jesus today?

What is the burden? "Lord Jesus, I give you my..."

What's His gift? "Lord Jesus, I receive your..."

ACTION QUESTIONS

1. What is one step of obedience you can take this week, based on what you've learned today? *(NOTE – You might consider stopping and prayerfully asking God to answer this question for you, taking 30-45 seconds to listen in silence for an answer, then write it down.)*
2. During the coming week, who is someone with whom you can share what you learned today? *(NOTE – Consider repeating the same step with this question as the previous question.)*