



As we approach Christmas, we continue studying the people who would have been most closely associated with Jesus at His birth. The next person we will study is Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. When we talk about Joseph as the father of Jesus, it's an interesting subject. We know that God is Jesus' Father but God trusted Joseph to care for His son while on earth. God could have chosen any couple; any mother and father to rear Jesus but He chose Joseph. The news that Mary was pregnant must have been devastating to Joseph but he handles it extraordinarily well. As we study Matthew 1, keep an eye out for Joseph's example of obedience to God.

1. Neal shared about how Captain Baker flew strategic air command in the Vietnam war. During Captain Baker's training he learned obedience in his role. Who or what has taught you the most about obedience in your life? What did you learn?
2. **Read Matthew 1:18-19.** In these verses we learn about the character of Joseph. The law permitted him to stone Mary to death (Deuteronomy 22:22), but he chose a different route. Share about a time when God developed your character.
3. Joseph offered grace to Mary when he found out she was pregnant. Let's study Grace more. **Read: John 8:1-11, Romans 3:24, Ephesians 2:8, and 2 Timothy 1:9.** How is God working in your life to make you a more grace-giving person?
4. God shows up in a powerful way (**read Matthew 1:20-23**). Can you think about a time when God changed your plans? It might not have happened because of an angelic visit in the night, but it is just as memorable for you.
5. It seems that in every angelic visit, the first message is: *Don't be afraid*. We are told to not be afraid when we are clearly afraid. **Read Psalm 27:1, 34:4-5, Isaiah 41:13, and Luke 14:27.** What fear do you need to surrender to God today?
6. The angel tells Joseph to name the baby Jesus. In Hebrew culture, it was the father's duty to name the child. This was a way of the father showing dominance or mastery over the child. How does this change how Joseph and Jesus interact?
7. Joseph had a secret plan to leave Mary and now God has intervened (**read Matthew 1:24-25**). In keeping with his righteous character, Joseph is obedient. In what way(s) is God prompting you to increase your obedience to Him?
8. Close your time in prayer. Pray for courage to invite a friend to meet Jesus.