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## An Example for Fathers

Father's Day is upon us. God's design for fathers is to provide and care for the family. It goes without saying that this is as demanding a responsibility as it is varied.

God has given fathers directions in Scripture, but also examples. One saying is "actions can teach more effectively than a lecture." Stated another way, "example is better than precept."

The Bible gives us examples to follow as well as not to follow. Our supreme example to follow is God. Ephesians chapter 5 opens,

"be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."



The apostle John in chapter 2 of his first letter tells us "to walk just as He [Jesus] walked" (6). The apostle Paul repeatedly tells believers to follow his example as he followed Christ, as well as each of us being an example others can follow.

Think with me about one father's example for us, Joseph, the earthly father or, more accurately, the stepfather / foster father of Jesus. The Bible does not give us many details about him, but the snippets God has given us show us some of his character which is a good example for fathers, and all of us.

The first reference to Joseph in Matthew chapter 1 tells us "he was a righteous man" (19). He was right before God, and lived rightly as he was careful to keep God's law, to fulfill his obligations. This was his character which he lived out consistently.

When God spoke Joseph listened and obeyed. In Matthew chapter 1 when he learned that Mary was pregnant he planned not to disgrace her, but relate rightly by being considerate, compassionate and kind in quietly ending the betrothal.

Then when the angel filled him in on Mary being pregnant with the Savior by the Holy Spirit and so then he could take her as his wife, Matthew tells us he "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him" (24).

In Matthew chapter 2, after Jesus was born, when an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream telling him to take Mary and Jesus and flee to Egypt, we read, “So Joseph got up and took the Child and His mother while it was still night, and left for Egypt” (14). When Herod died and the killing of boys born around the time of Jesus’ birth ended, an angel told Joseph to return to Israel. Matthew tells us, “So Joseph got up, took the Child and His mother, and came into the land of Israel” (21). Once again later, after being warned by God in a dream to go to Galilee, Joseph went and settled in Nazareth.

Luke’s gospel tells us Joseph was faithful to go to Jerusalem with Mary and Jesus to offer the sacrifice for her first-born son as the law required. Later, when Jesus was twelve, Joseph followed the pattern of taking Jesus with him for the feast of the Passover in Jerusalem.

Joseph’s character was displayed in his pattern of living righteously, being right with God. Specifically notice that Joseph not only listened to God, but also obeyed Him. He obeyed willingly and readily, including in being a father.

We don’t have angels appearing to announce God’s direction to us. But God has given us His word and the Holy Spirit to open our eyes and minds to hear and understand His word, which is His will for us.

Fathers, and all of us, this begins with our hearts. Do we have a steadfast desire and commitment to listen to God and willingly, immediately obey Him? Note one stanza of Psalm 119,

“Deal generously with Your servant, that I may live and keep Your word. Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your Law. I am a stranger on the earth; do not hide Your commandments from me. My soul is crushed with longing for Your ordinances at all times. You rebuke the arrogant, the cursed, who wander from Your commandments. Take disgrace and contempt away from me, for I comply with Your testimonies. Even though rulers sit and speak against me, your servant meditates on Your statutes. Your testimonies also are my delight; they are my advisers” (17-24).

Is that our desire and prayer? Is it *your* desire and prayer?

If it is it will be evidenced in regularly spending time in God’s word and prayer. That then will be lived out in action in all areas of our lives, including, especially in our families as fathers.

Let God’s glimpses of Joseph’s character and action inspire you, motivate you to be godly by following his example.

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